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THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

By

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PREFACE

This book seeks to illuminate the oft-told story of Christianity's rise by a new reading of the history in the light of contemporary social experience. Attention is fixed especially upon the environments, attitudes, and activities in real life of those persons and groups who, from generation to generation, constituted the membership of the new movement. From the time of its first emergence among Jews in Palestine until it attained to a position of eminence among Gentiles, its adherents were not only part of a varied and complex society but their own movement grew from simple beginnings into a complex social organism.

Until within comparatively recent times interest in rehearsing the story of Christianity's beginnings has been confined mainly to a recovery of the distinctive teachings of the new religion. Protestant historians almost universally have been disposed to emphasize the content of Christian doctrine, while Roman Catholic scholars, although stressing the formal institution of the church, have always had prominently

in mind its authority for determining the validity of doctrine. In contrast with this customary emphasis upon dogma, the present volume deals specifically with the more comprehensive and fundamental matter of social experience as a key to the understanding of the genesis and early history of the Christian movement.

The first, third, fourth, and fifth chapters of this book were originally delivered essentially in their present form as a series of lectures in connection with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Wesleyan Theological College, Montreal, Canada. For the cordial reception given him on that occasion by the faculty, alumni, and friends of the institution the lecturer takes this opportunity of expressing his sincere appreciation.

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

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CHAPTER I

THE "NEW" NEW TESTAMENT STUDY

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that the New Testament may be made a veritable barrier to an understanding of the beginnings of Christianity. While this body of literature is the principal source of information from which the history of ancient Christianity can be recovered, yet the New Testament may be so used as to constitute a serious hindrance for one who seeks to picture the genesis of the Christian religion in terms of vital experiences and immediate social contacts on the part of its earliest advocates.

Many features connected with the history of early Christianity inevitably passed out of memory, save as that memory was partially preserved in the books of the New Testament. These documents survived, while the new religion as a fluid movement in ancient society was destined to lose itself in the gradually swelling stream of an ever enlarging Christianity. It is not surprising, therefore, that later genera-

tions often gave little if any attention to the earlier history of the new religious movement, and centered interest upon the New Testament for its own sake. As a definite body of sacred literature, sanctified by inclusion in a canon of scripture, these documents could be viewed quite apart from any realistic historical connections and without specific reference to the life of the age in which they were produced.

As an abiding entity, preserved in static form, the New Testament readily became for successive generations of Christians a historically unconditioned source of authority for use in the solution of problems peculiar to their own day. Accordingly, they built up an interpretation of this literature suitable to the exigencies of their own immediate environment, and any method of study that would direct attention away from these topics of present interest might easily seem to be a perversion of the Sacred Book. In fact, attempts of historians to clear away subsequent interpretations, and to exhibit these early Christian writings in the white light of their original setting often aroused resentment. The documents had become so thoroughly modernized that popular use of them as a source of information for the Christianity of

the first century meant little more than a reading into the past of problems and interests that properly belonged only to subsequent times.

Under these circumstances, the New Testament in popular usage became a formidable obstruction in the path of the student who sought an acquaintance with historical Christianity as a religious movement in the ancient world. Attempted reconstructions of the history waited upon contemporary methods of New Testament interpretation. These methods controlled the purposes of the student, they determined the items selected by him for emphasis, and they shaped his notions regarding the distinctive nature of ancient Christianity. Only as new interpretations of this literature forced themselves upon the attention of scholars was any revision of the older readings of the history of early Christianity made possible.

I

The disposition to make the early Christian movement subordinate in attention to the New Testament book was the normal outcome of that special interest in the Bible that is characteristic of Protestantism. When the reformers lost confidence in the Catholic church, they

needed a new focus for their loyalties. This need was met by fixing attention on the Bible. Refusing to yield obedience to an ecclesiastical hierarchy, they professed instead an unswerving allegiance to a sacred literature. By virtue of these circumstances of its origin, Protestantism has always been predominantly the religion of the book. The use of Scripture in public worship and in private devotion has been regarded as a primary religious duty, while the institutional aspects of the church's life and the content of its doctrines have ever been held amenable to scriptural tests of validity.

Moderns have inherited not only the original Protestant interest in the book; the purposes for which it was used and the methods devised for its interpretation were also passed on to posterity. The reformers were still dominated by the inherited notion that religious conduct and thinking had to be justified by appeal to some ancient norm. Having broken with Rome, they could no longer rely upon the established ecclesiastical authorities, hence they turned to the Bible for infallible guidance. Reaffirming it to be the inspired record of God's revelation to mankind, they made it the final court of appeal.

Since Protestant theologians believed, not only that Scripture was infallible but that it had been written with specific reference to the needs of all subsequent time, they thought it both profitable and necessary to derive therefrom a body of normative teaching specificially applicable to their own problems. No primary importance was attached to the particular circumstances under which a scriptural document had been composed, nor were any questions asked regarding the special interests that might have been dominant when the original author and his first readers lived. Without hesitation it was unconsciously assumed that the biblical writer had centered attention upon the particular issues with which the reformers themselves were so vitally concerned.

This lack of historical perspective yielded an easy corollary. Granting normativeness and timelessness to be essential characteristics of Scripture, one readily inferred that any biblical word or phrase which, by any process whatever, could be associated with an issue at present under consideration, constituted an authoritative source of appeal for the justification of opinion. One did not ask what the quoted word meant in its original setting, but

only what it could be understood to mean in the light of needs felt by the later readers. Such procedure resulted in an uncritical assembling of words and phrases from all parts of Scripture and an indiscriminate application of these terms to problems and issues that were a peculiar product of the reformers' own situation. They easily assumed that an infallible Bible could be made to yield, by one skilful in the process of interpretation, a substantial body of assembled texts bearing directly upon any practical or theological theme under which these texts might be suitably classified. Working upon this assumption, they went through the Bible from cover to cover, gathering with diligence and skill a vast array of biblical support for the interests which they themselves represented. They generously cast their own ideas upon the waters of Scripture in order that these same ideas might return to them clothed with biblical authority.

Belief in the normativeness of a Scripture composed with the needs of the present specifically in view, and yielding up its treasures of infallible guidance by application of the proof-text method, has produced within Protestant circles a distinctive type of biblical interpreta-

tion. Its specific aim was to deduce from the Bible a body of ethical precepts and a system of theological beliefs adequate to all future needs. Thus the New Testament was studied, not with a primary interest in reconstructing the original story of Christianity's beginnings, but in order to procure an authoritative collection of practical and doctrinal instructions harmonious with present needs.

This type of interest in New Testament study was not, to be sure, a new creation on the part of the reformers, but they pursued it with a new seriousness of purpose and with an industry that clearly differentiated them from their Roman predecessors. The fundamental assumption that a group of documents composed in the Mediterranean world of the first century could furnish the solution to all the religious problems of sixteenth-century Europe imposed a peculiarly heavy burden upon the interpretative ability of the reformers. But they and their successors took up the task with confidence, and in its zealous pursuit ultimately worked out an elaborate exegetical technique. If the Sacred Book was the infallible word of God and the repository of that knowledge which makes wise unto salva-

tion, then nothing could be of greater importance than a correct apprehension of its meaning in even the minutest details. Failure to comprehend the exact significance of a phrase or neglect of some syntactical refinement might result in a misapprehension of revelation, and so might jeopardize a soul's eternal welfare.

II

As an instrument for accomplishing the purpose for which it was designed, one can hardly imagine anything more effective than the interpretative processes that in the course of time were devised and put into operation by the best conservative scholarship of Protestantism. Nor is it surprising that a machine so mechanically perfect in its structure should have survived and have been kept in operation long after the original incentive for its creation had disappeared, and even when it was no longer used for its former specific purposes.

The standard New Testament commentaries of today, in their meticulous attention to philological detail and their phrase-by-phrase exposition, substantially perpetuate the technique of their predecessors. Most modern work, however, lacks that stress upon the

infallibility of Scripture and that assumption of its timelessness which gave peculiar point and purpose to the results reached by the older exegetes. In a corresponding degree later interpreters dwell less persistently upon the acquisition of homiletical materials and the production of doctrinal formulas, which previously had been regarded as the final goal of all exegesis. And just in proportion as the eye of the scholar has turned away from the present and fixed its gaze upon the past, has interpretation taken on a new character. If the older type is called practical and doctrinal, then the later type may be distinguished as historical.

With the rise of a keener interest in the past, students viewed the New Testament less *en bloc*, and directed attention more particularly to the several books of which it is composed. One ceased looking exclusively at the forest and undertook an inspection of the individual trees. When attention had been arrested by the obvious fact that during the first century of Christianity's history no authorized collection of New Testament writings existed, the way was open to a study of the actual process by which different Christian books had been brought together and given canonical authority.

Once the problem was broached, it was only a short time until New Testament scholars worked out, in its principal outlines, those stages in the process of historical evolution by which a collection of Christian writings had been assembled, and for which apostolic authority was claimed. Thus scholarship arrived at the conclusion, now generally accepted, that a definite canon of New Testament scripture first emerged about the middle of the second century, a date which, so far as some of the individual books are concerned, was nearly a hundred years later than the time of their composition. And even the latest books had existed independently as separate documents for approximately half a century before the notion of a New Testament canon definitely crystallized.

Under the inspiration of this growing interest in matters historical, students searched out the numerous manuscripts and the different translations into various languages, in which the books of the New Testament had been preserved throughout the course of the centuries. From among these witnesses, with their multiplicity of readings, critical study reconstructed a more accurate text of the original Greek. This historical restoration of the text

was one of the first subjects to invite scholarly inquiry, and its results have been generally accepted with full assurance. No one acquainted with the facts would assume for a moment that all textual problems have been solved beyond possibility of future revision. Yet there is a substantial consensus of opinion to the effect that our modern critical editions are in the main reliable, and that in only comparatively few instances are we still in serious doubt as to what the original authors actually wrote.

Also in the field of lexicography and grammar, notable progress has been made in the direction of a more distinctly historical interest. Older scholars brought to their interpretation of the New Testament a wealth of philological knowledge derived from the study of the Greek classics. To this information they added familiarity with the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which had been the Bible of the first Greek-speaking Christians. With these tools in hand an effort was made to determine the probable meaning of all New Testament words and idioms by tracing their history from their first occurrence in classical authors down through Septuagint usage to the New

Testament itself. Nor was Semitic influence ignored, as it operated indirectly through the Septuagint or directly through the more immediate Jewish antecedents of different New Testament authors. As a result of this work in philological research, conducted in a distinctly historical spirit, students have had at their disposal for more than half a century excellent books to guide them in the field of the New Testament grammar and vocabulary. Within more recent times still further help has been provided by a better knowledge of the common spoken Greek, the Koine, in use at the very time when the New Testament writers lived.

As historical interest increased, the question of the date of the individual books pressed into the foreground of attention. When the New Testament was seen to be a composite collection of various documents assembled by the early church, one was led to ask whether the several parts had been arranged by their collectors in the exact order of composition. A negative answer was almost immediately forthcoming, and in fact it was presently discovered that some of the earliest books to be written had been placed well along toward the

end of the present collection. It became perfectly apparent that chronological sequence of composition had occupied no place in the thought of the church when it assembled, and by its usage established as canonical, the different New Testament writings. Nor did the question of date particularly concern the early Protestant interpreters, whose interests were primarily practical and doctrinal. For them every part of the sacred page spoke with uniform authority regardless of circumstances of origin. But with the rise of historical interest the dating of documents became a matter of fundamental concern, and important results in this field of inquiry were soon reached. The nature of the available information was such that the actual date of certain books had to remain in doubt, yet most of them yielded somewhat readily to chronological classification, while others could be placed within well-fixed limits even though they might not be dated with absolute certainty.

Historical inquisitiveness did not cease with asking when a book was written; it also demanded to know the name of the author. In the case of the great majority of the books the church had settled the question of author-

ship as part of the process of collecting and canonizing the several writings. But whether traditional opinions rested upon adequate historical information, and, furthermore, whether the desire to affirm apostolic or near-apostolic authority for the documents included in the New Testament, did not so affect the judgment of Christians in the second century as to render their opinions untrustworthy, was a problem which the historian had to face. Might it not have been pious motives rather than historical knowledge that induced these Christians to hold opinions suitable to the needs of their own situation—opinions which they undoubtedly put forth in all good conscience, but which cannot be trusted as historically accurate? This line of inquiry soon led the modern historian to the conclusion that in the case of several of the New Testament books he was unable to reaffirm the tradition respecting their authorship.

Nor was this all. An examination of the contents of certain books led to a very positive conviction that the document could not have been written by the individual whom tradition had designated as its author. Over a century ago attention was called to the differences in

content and character between the Pastoral Epistles and other letters of Paul. These observations ultimately crystallized into an opinion, now widely held, that the Pastorals had not been, at least in their present form, written by the apostle, but had been composed at a later date under his name for the purpose of giving his authority to teaching especially appropriate to the needs of the church in the next generation. A century or more of discussion on the problem of authorship has left us in possession of a large measure of doubt. Apart from the principal Pauline letters, perhaps the authorship of no New Testament book can be fixed with absolute certainty. To be sure, some hypotheses have greater weight than others. One would feel far safer in accepting the Markan authorship of the Second Gospel than in holding to the Matthaean authorship of the First; nevertheless each view is in its own way hypothetical.

Uncertainty of date and ignorance of authorship are not insuperable barriers for a historian when he has before him the document itself. And when, further, he has a series of documents that were produced in similar settings and within the same general period of time he may

ascertain much about their origin from an individual and comparative study of their literary form and content. This fact is illustrated in a conspicuous way by study of the first three gospels, called the "Synoptics." Perhaps today it seems almost incredible that less than a century ago readers of these books were unaware that Mark had constituted one of the principal source-documents used in the composition of Matthew and of Luke. As everybody now knows, who has given the matter the slightest consideration, the Gospel of Mark was copied extensively and often almost verbatim by the writer of Matthew as well as by the writer of Luke. Yet this commonly known fact of today is really the product of the historical work of the past century, indeed, of the past half-century. Only within the last fifty years has it become the common possession even of scholars.

Investigation in the field of literary origins has been a very important instrument in the hands of the student. By this means he has determined not only the literary priority of Mark over Matthew and Luke, but has discovered embedded in the gospels still another and earlier body of source materials, which

modern writers call the "sayings" or "Q." Similarly in the Book of Acts students have been able to distinguish between earlier documents incorporated by the author and those portions of the narrative which came from his own pen. Likewise, in certain of the epistles, literary analysis has explained the presence of inconsistencies by discriminating between the original elements of the book and the editorial supplements and interpretations introduced by the final writer. With varying degrees of success still other New Testament books have been subjected to the tests of literary criticism.

The immediate outcome of such inquiry is an increased emphasis upon historical interests. Perhaps the chief result is an enlargement of the historian's vision. If a document can be successfully broken up into its constituent units, and the earlier strata be distinguished from the later, then these several parts become a series of pictures in a historical succession, instead of a single vista. One now sees not only that portion of the history to which the final author of a book himself belongs, but by an analytical differentiation of his sources one obtains a knowledge of the earlier periods which otherwise would have been entirely inaccessible.

This result is perhaps the greatest service that has been rendered to New Testament interpretation by distinctively literary studies. By this means modern students have been able to distinguish, often with a large measure of assurance, between the earlier and later elements in New Testament history and hence have been greatly aided in reconstructing the story of Christianity's growth from simple beginnings to a more and more complex state of development.

Questions of date, authorship, and literary genesis are, however, only introductory to a further quest. As the eye of the student has turned more and more consistently toward the past, his interest has fixed itself upon certain more ultimate goals. Back of the individual books and even beyond any possible literary sources that may have gone into their making, he has sought to recover the persons whom they portray. To reconstruct the story of the life of Jesus has been one of the eminent interests to engage attention during the last century, perhaps one might truthfully say that the chief incentive for the study of the gospels has been a desire to derive therefrom a trustworthy account of the doings and teachings of Jesus.

A similar statement would apply to the Pauline epistles and the Book of Acts. Diligent investigation of these documents has had conspicuously in view the reconstruction of a dependable story of the apostle's life and work. For a century now the productiveness of activity in these fields has been indeed phenomenal.

Another distinct aim of historical study has been to recover the content of New Testament teaching. Sometimes it has seemed as if the formulation of a New Testament theology had been regarded as the ultimate goal of all interpretation. This interest issued in the writing of systematic treatises upon the theological views expressed either in the New Testament as a whole or in the individual books. The standard manuals of systematic theology furnished chapter headings—doctrine of God, doctrine of man, sin, atonement, and the like—that were employed as captions under which New Testament teachings were arranged, and a comprehensive exposition of the theological content of the New Testament books became synonymous with, or was regarded as the proper substitute for, the older type of dogmatic theology. Hence the supposed importance of biblical theology as the crowning work

of historical study. It was perfectly natural that Protestants, with their characteristic regard for the primacy of the Bible, should contemplate this result with a large measure of satisfaction.

When, however, historical inquiry was carried on in so thoroughgoing fashion as to discover apparent discrepancies of opinion between different parts of the New Testament, and sometimes even within a single book, it became necessary to substitute for a theology of the whole New Testament a reconstruction of the teaching of particular books or of certain prominent individuals. With especial earnestness attempts were made to recover the genuine teachings of Jesus in distinction from the views of his disciples who presumably had been responsible for importing into the gospel story extraneous elements side by side with the genuine tradition of what Jesus himself had taught. Similarly efforts were made to recover the true mind of Paul, as represented in his genuine letters, in contrast with ideas that had been wrongly ascribed to him by his biographer in the Book of Acts or by editors of pseudonymous epistles. In this effort to ascertain the actual opinions of these two outstanding figures in early Christian history, the scholars of the last genera-

tion produced several important books dealing with the "teaching" of Jesus and the "theology" of Paul.

Some students have thought that historical investigation should aim at a still more remote goal. Is it not possible, they have said, to penetrate even beyond the formal teachings of Jesus or Paul to the inner religious experience of these individuals and to ferret out the secrets of their own religious consciousness? It has been thought possible to portray the course of events which transpired within Paul's own soul, so to speak, on the Damascus road and in his hours of subsequent meditation. Also in the case of Jesus, much energy has been expended upon analyses of his own religious psychology. This effort to peer into the mind of Jesus was pursued with especial diligence during the closing quarter of the last and the first decade of the present century and resulted in the production of many books upon the moot problem of Jesus' self-consciousness.

Thus "historical" study, as we have called it, in contrast with the practical and doctrinal type of earlier times, has now for upwards of a century been in process of development, and has produced some very definite results. Begin-

ning with thought of the New Testament as a single book existing in a modern tongue, historical inquiry has threaded its way back through the centuries to the time when the several documents were not yet assembled into a canon. Treating them individually, it has endeavored to submit each to a just process of scientific examination. It has tried to restore the exact form in which each book left the author's hand, and to interpret its meaning in terms of the original writer's own vocabulary and idiom. It has sought to learn the actual date of each document and to ascertain as far as possible the name and personality of the author. Indeed, it has engaged in the more precarious but necessary task of analyzing composite documents into their constituent parts and of unraveling the story of their literary history. On the basis of these preliminary studies it has undertaken the more constructive work of reproducing the life-history of outstanding individuals, Jesus and Paul in particular. It has also ventured to formulate in whole or in part a system of New Testament thought. Finally, it has attempted to penetrate into the inner religious experience of individuals, even of a Paul or a Jesus. Such, in brief, are the

results of approximately a century of historical work upon the New Testament.

III

In the type of study just described it is the book, the New Testament as a collection of literary documents, that has held the center of the stage. Consequently the dominating interest of the inquiry may be termed not simply "historical" but more exactly "literary-historical." The student fixes his gaze upon the past, but particularly upon a group of surviving books.

The results of this scrutiny of the literature have been so significant for interpretation that one might readily assume this type of study to be the last word in New Testament methodology. But such is not the fact. Within recent years a quite new interest has been clamoring for recognition. Especially within the last quarter of a century there has appeared in certain circles a marked inclination to withdraw emphasis from the New Testament as a collection of documents, and to place stress upon the Christian society out of which this literature came. As everyone recognizes on a moment's reflection, the New Testament did

not produce early Christianity. On the contrary, Christianity produced the New Testament. Back of the literature stand the persons who were responsible for its rise, and these individuals in turn were members of Christian groups and closely bound up with the interests of the Christian society. The various New Testament books were written to serve the Christian cause, and it was amid the activities of the communities as going concerns that the documents were preserved and finally assembled into a canon.

When study of the New Testament is undertaken from this point of view and fashioned in accordance with this new interest, it ceases to be merely literary-historical in type, and takes on a form that may be described more distinctively as social-historical. Instead of concentrating exclusively upon the New Testament documents, one presses inquiry on to the more remote Christian society within which the writings arose and were finally assembled into a collection to be used for purposes of propaganda and control. The attempt to re-examine the New Testament in the light of this social setting carries interpretation on to the most recent phase in its history.

Not only were the New Testament writings produced and cherished within a Christian society, but Christians themselves were part of a larger social whole, first Jewish and later gentile. The older type of study turned directly from the last verse of the Old Testament to the first verse of the New, thereby ignoring the intervening history, and passing over one of the most important epochs in the life of the Jewish people. During this period they had successfully revolted against their Syrian overlords and established an independent kingdom, which was a nearer approach than they had made for centuries, or ever were to make again, to the glory that had been theirs under David and Solomon. But it was in this age also that they came under the domination of Rome and experienced a tragic overthrow of their national hopes. Between the years 175 B.C. and 135 A.D. life within Palestine underwent a series of changes, involving important social consequence, not alone for the Jews as a whole, but also for those of their number who constituted the membership of the first Christian societies.

Attention to the Jewish environment of the first Christians has been a growing interest

among New Testament students since the closing decades of the last century. A fresh examination of Jewish documents from the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. has provided a large amount of information about the interests and activities of Palestinian Jews during the intra-biblical period. The resulting knowledge regarding the antecedents and immediate social environment both of Jesus and of his disciples has become an indispensable aid to the interpretation of that portion of New Testament history which is depicted in the gospels and the first half of the Book of Acts. One now knows that it would be sheer folly to attempt an adequate reconstruction of the career and teaching of Jesus, or of the subsequent history of his disciples within Palestine, without reference to the particular society by which both he and they were environed.

Any history of New Testament times, however, which is given up exclusively to the portrayal of conditions in Palestine only partially discharges its function. Long before the close of the New Testament period, indeed before the earliest book had been written, the Christian movement had spread beyond Palestine into gentile lands. The oldest Christian documents,

the epistles of Paul, were composed about the years 50–65, while the gospels, and perhaps all of the remaining New Testament books, received their present form during the last three decades of the first century. But already at the time of Paul's conversion, which was certainly before the year 35, Christians had begun to scatter beyond Palestine into various centers of population about the eastern Mediterranean. At first they constituted only small groups which no doubt were composed mainly of converted Jews of the Dispersion, but within a few years one finds in their midst also converts from among the Gentiles. In fact, in some communities the majority of the membership is evidently gentile from the start, and it is only a short time before the new movement becomes distinctly separated from contemporary Judaism even in the Diaspora.

Not only was the social environment of the Christian movement largely gentile well before the end of the first century, but it had severed almost completely any earlier bonds of social contact with the Jewish Christians of Palestine. During the first generation, in the time of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, the Christians of Jerusalem were treated by their gentile brethren at least

as peers, if not as superiors. But after the year 70, when the Jewish war against Rome resulted in the destruction of the Temple and inspired a new disdain on the part of Gentiles for all things Jewish, Palestinian Christianity rapidly lost prestige. It made few if any gains in membership, while the gentile communities constantly increased. By the year 100 Christianity is mainly a gentile religious movement, which undoubtedly still has not a few Jews in its membership, but the majority of converts are drawn from among non-Jews, and all are living together in a common gentile social environment.

It should also be observed that the present New Testament books did not arise within the Christian communities of Palestine, but on the contrary were products of Christianity on gentile soil. This fact is self-evident, of course, with respect to the letters of Paul. But the remaining books were probably without exception all composed after Paul's day and in Greek, and, if not always written by people of gentile birth, were at least intended for Greek-speaking readers living outside of Palestine. This gentile provenance is true even of the earliest gospel, Mark. Both ecclesiastical tradition and the

internal evidence of the book itself unite in bearing witness to this fact. The gospels of Matthew and Luke, while doubtless incorporating some earlier documents that may have been of Palestinian origin, nevertheless use Mark as a principal source and have clearly in view the problems and mission of Christianity within a Graeco-Roman world. When these gospels were written the new religion was fully launched upon the venturesome enterprise of gathering followers from among all the nations.

The initial step in interpretation, for a student who views the New Testament in its vital relations to the Christian society of ancient times, is orientation in that gentile world where the creators and earliest readers of this literature lived. He is not unmindful of Christianity's Jewish antecedents nor of its Palestinian inheritances, but he would visualize at the outset those areas of appeal and opportunity that caught the eye of the New Testament authors as they looked out upon their own immediate surroundings. Within this ancient milieu he would take his stand more specifically in the Christian society, indeed in one or another of the various Christian groups where the authors of the several New Testament docu-

ments toiled and whose cause they served. From this vantage ground he would seek to appreciate the problems of the various writers, to understand their methods, to sympathize with their aims, to discover their motives, to share their interests and attitudes, and to repeat in imagination their own vital experiences.

Literary emphasis, which has played so prominent a part in New Testament study in the course of the last half-century, does not necessarily preclude attention to the social background, and in fact may greatly aid in securing the best results in this field of interest. But literary study has not always, perhaps not usually, recognized the social factors conditioning the origin of the documents. Sometimes quite the contrary course has been pursued. It has occasionally been assumed, at least tacitly, that the New Testament books could be fittingly studied as given quantities of information sufficient in themselves and capable of being adequately interpreted apart from any vital setting or social connections. Like geological specimens, they could be broken into pieces, examined under the microscope, treated with acids, classified, and catalogued without regard to their genetic connections in

ancient society. When one fixed attention exclusively upon the literature it was readily treated as something that, Melchizedek-like, existed without apparent ancestry. Or to change the figure, it was viewed as a mummy on exhibition in a museum of antiquities or as a corpse over which one held an autopsy. Interest centered on the diagnosis rather than on the vital operations of the original organism.

But how may one vitalize a document? The reformers gave the New Testament books life by freely injecting into them the vital interests of the age of the reformation. Social emphasis, on the other hand, calls for the revitalizing of the literature, not by reading into it the life of a subsequent age, but by visualizing in realistic fashion the very life of the place and time in which the various New Testament books were produced. One infuses them, not with the spirit of the modern age, but with the living spirit of the ancient world. Whether the interests of the present are in strict agreement with those of the past may often be open to question. But the function of interpretation is, at all costs to modern wishes, to allow the life of the ancients to throb afresh through the veins of the historical documents.

In short, New Testament study as socially conceived begins with emphasis upon the actual experience of the people who composed the Christian societies in New Testament times. The student seeks to orient himself amid the vital activities of the Christians both in relation to their environment and within their own communities as they are found scattered about the Mediterranean in the last half of the first century. In this way he hopes to acquire a point of view and an insight into the meaning of the several New Testament writings that will be in accordance with the design of their authors and the understanding of their original readers. Furthermore, in tracing the subsequent history of the New Testament books one recognizes the necessity for a like social emphasis. In order to understand the fundamental causes that led to their use in the churches and resulted in their preservation, assembly into a collection, and elevation to a position of canonical authority, one must give attention primarily to the interests and activities of the Christian groups within which the process of canonization was carried through to completion.

IV

This new social emphasis has a much larger significance than that which pertains merely to the exegesis of the New Testament text. It involves also a new approach to the history, and a new conception of the character of ancient Christianity in general.

The view of primitive Christianity entertained by the reformers was very explicit. The New Testament, as the divine deposit of truth once for all delivered to the saints, was thought to be the complete and perfect embodiment of true religion for all time. Whatever there was of truth in the historical development of Christianity subsequent to the writing of the New Testament books, this was necessarily a mere reproduction of the truth contained in these Scriptures, supplemented by the prophecies of the Old Testament. Working from this a priori basis, and unhindered by any historical perspective in their handling of the sources, the reformers with perfect sincerity represented primitive Christianity as in all essential respects identical with that type of religion which seemed to them most appropriate to their own needs and best suited to their own peculiar environment. Assuming that

they were exactly reproducing the original, they straightway painted the picture after the model of their own age.

The reformers' way of depicting the history of early Christianity, their conception of its actual character, and their appraisal of its significance were determined by a belief that Christianity in the ancient world had been essentially a unique deposit from without, and hence existed quite independently of any determining social conditions or formative influences operating through the environment. It was something existing in society but not of it, and was in no true sense a product of spiritual endeavor on the part of its original representatives as they struggled toward a worthy realization of religious experience and sought to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling amid realistic social contacts.

With the rise of literary criticism the traditional Protestant conception of early Christianity was gradually revised. Yet literary study did not necessarily produce an immediate and radical change of attitude. Primitive Christianity might still be and in fact often was regarded as essentially a body of revelation divinely guaranteed, if not by the original New

Testament canon, at least by a somewhat reduced scriptural norm determined by means of literary criticism. Certain parts of the New Testament might have to be set aside because found to be less well authenticated than others, but the portion that remained could be used to reconstruct a history of Christianity essentially after the traditional model. One who found, for example, the genuine story of Jesus' words and deeds in a reduced quantity of gospel material, distinguished from later supplements and elaborations, might ascribe to his restoration of the story all the reverence and normativeness that had originally attached to the whole. This method of procedure, when applied in general to the re-writing of early Christian history, did not differ in principle from that of earlier times.

Nevertheless, the very act of deliberately looking upon the past as a reality to be distinguished from the present could not remain without effect. Inevitably it issued in important changes of view as to the manner in which the early history of Christianity should be depicted. The quest for a normative result was gradually abandoned, and the past was allowed to go its own way independently of

present-day needs and interests. History was read in the light of the extant documents, even though such reading might greatly reduce the range of its value as a criterion for moderns. The historian regarded his task as that of setting before the eye of the reader an exact account of the past as he believed it to be deducible from the literary sources of information when analyzed and evaluated by the processes of a scientific method.

To complete the work of historical restoration, the modern social emphasis is needed to breathe life into the skeleton which literary study so carefully assembles. It is essential to be sure that the skeleton be recovered, but it is equally necessary that it be clothed with the flesh and blood of real life. The newer method of study therefore depicts the history of ancient Christianity in terms of an evolving social experience in the realm of religious interests on the part of the actual people who constituted the membership of the new movement. From this point of view, one who would understand the true nature of Christianity, its real genius and the secret of its success, will seek an answer in the social interpretation of the new religion's

development as it early passed from its original Jewish home in Palestine to the wider gentile environment of the Mediterranean world, where it gradually rose to power during the opening centuries of the present era.

CHAPTER II

THE TRANSITION TO A GENTILE ENVIRONMENT

Christianity first appeared in history as a religious movement among Palestinian Jews. Jesus was a Jew of Palestine, as were also his personal disciples. Contact with Gentiles during his lifetime was only occasional, and was so exceptional that its mention in the gospels usually calls forth special comment. It was also among the Jews of Palestine that the followers of Jesus assembled after his death when they constituted themselves into a distinct group bound together in loyalty to their crucified master.

From the very outset this new movement was socially conditioned in a much more emphatic way than is commonly appreciated. Its representatives retained a large body of heritages taken over from their ancestors, and carried on their activities in intimate contact with contemporary society. The main problems which they undertook to solve and the

principal ends which they aimed to accomplish were furnished to them ready-made by the conditions amid which they lived. Also the dominating interests of the new communities were throughout socially motivated. The members were chiefly concerned with the hope of realizing a new status of society and they regarded it as their primary function to offer a new program for the attainment of this desire. The arid intellectualism of a subsequent age might find its own chief interests satisfied by attempts to define the content of early Christian dogma regarding the person of the Messiah, but the zeal of the first disciples easily overleaped all academic questions in its eager expectation of Jesus' speedy return to establish a new order that would be the "restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets" (Acts 3:19–21).

I

By the beginning of the present era Jewish society, in which religious interests were predominant, had reached an advanced stage of development. For many centuries experience had been accumulating and customs crystallizing into the making of a social structure that

now exhibited very distinctive characteristics. Perhaps among none of their neighbors had the same measure of social determination and control been devised to perpetuate inheritances from the past with a view to insuring present and future safety. A vast array of customs had acquired institutional sanctity, and principally through the perpetuation of these heritages did the people hope to meet their present social necessities.

Among the formal institutions of Judaism the temple stands out most conspicuously. The memory of the nation's history was closely bound up with the story of its efforts to maintain intact, and in worthy fashion, this visible symbol of the Deity's presence among his chosen people. Through the payment of a wide variety of temple taxes and the numerous offerings required by law, this institution touched the life of the common man at many points. The strain must sometimes have been rather severe upon one's economic resources, but the attitude of loyalty to the sacred institution was so firm that any sacrifice involved seems to have been borne not merely with fortitude but usually with evident joyfulness. Perhaps the very fact of the temple's remoteness

from the daily life of the average Jew lent to it a heightened sacredness that might otherwise have been more difficult to maintain.

Another distinct social value was realized through the observance of the great festivals of the religious year, when large numbers of the people visited Jerusalem to attend the celebrations. The Passover, which was the principal feast, revived annually the confidence that the Jewish race was the chosen people of the true God, who had marvelously delivered them from enslavement in Egypt and raised up for them a lawgiver who had received from a divine source a body of inerrant instruction for the correct ordering of every phase of life. Pentecost, observed fifty days after Passover, also gave further confirmation of this attitude of reverence toward tradition. As it was made the occasion for commemorating God's delivery of the Law to Moses, it had the psychological value of an annual birthday celebration in the history of the Jewish religion. The Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn, while perhaps less significant in awaking stirring memories to confirm traditional sanctities, furnished still another occasion for cementing the sense of social solidarity and community of interest so

characteristic of the Jews. Great indeed must have been the influence of these annual festivals for maintaining a feeling of unity and an assurance that Deity presided over the destinies of the nation.

Still other institutions functioned more distinctly for the benefit of specific groups. Ever since the return from the captivity in Babylonia the synagogue had been an important factor in the life of every Jewish community. To use a modern analogy, it may be said to have served as church edifice, city hall, and public school in one. Here the people met regularly for stated religious services. It was here, too, that justice for the community was administered, where judgments were delivered and punishments inflicted. Also educational activities of an elementary sort were conducted in connection with this building. For the common life of the people it was perhaps the most significant of their institutions. So far as the masses were concerned, the temple and the festivals afforded opportunity for only occasional experiences, but the synagogue was a permanent possession of the local community and through its activities gave every individual an assurance of social security.

The effect of the synagogue in giving direction and fixity to Jewish society was greatly augmented by the Jews' possession of a sacred literature. This body of ancient tradition had acquired a unique reverence through long years of survival as an authority to substantiate customs. To be sure, in the course of time as new problems had arisen and society had acquired new experiences, the specific content of the Scriptures had become antiquated, but the gap between the past and the present had been bridged by activities of professional interpreters who had made it their life-work to show how the more recent needs of society could be met by a fresh reading of the ancient documents. Thus the properly trained interpreter had come to be quite as essential a factor within Jewish society as were the Scriptures themselves.

The ever increasing body of traditional interpretation, passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, early acquired a distinct sanctity in its own right. Theoretically, its authority was secondary to that of the canonical books, but often in actual practice it was itself the immediate source of appeal. It served an indispensable function in

spanning the otherwise impassable gulf that lay between an ancient body of literature representing conditions no longer existent, and a present status of society in which new conditions prevailed. Only by means of this oral tradition, to which accretions might be made from time to time, was it possible for the Jewish people to retain that feeling of security attaching to their possession of sacred books which were assumed to furnish to society infallible direction for all time.

While the attitude of Jews toward foreigners was always that of social aloofness, it is one of the anomalies of history that no people have ever had a closer and more constant contact with strangers than have the Jews. Palestine was a veritable no-man's land of the ancient world. Over it the armies of Asia, Africa, and Europe fought back and forth throughout the course of centuries of international conflict. The Jewish people themselves, although ever eager for the possession of national independence, enjoyed this privilege at only a few brief intervals during their whole history. Very largely on account of their geographical location, they were destined to remain under the yoke of successive foreign powers. Palestine was too

strategically situated to escape conquest by each new world-empire.

To the ancestors of the Hebrews, emerging from the barrenness of the desert, Palestine may indeed have seemed to be a land flowing with milk and honey, but for the much more prosperous people of Babylonia, Egypt, Persia, Macedonia, or Rome it can hardly have been the wealth of the country and the hope of deriving therefrom a substantial tribute that prompted conquest of the territory. Not because of what Palestine itself contained, but because of the political and commercial advantages accruing to its possessor, did foreign nations make conquest of the Holy Land of the Hebrews. To possess this territory meant the control not only of the principal land routes between Mesopotamia and Egypt, but also of important seaports on the eastern Mediterranean. In these respects Palestine was the key to the East.

Long before Christian times there had existed a close interplay between Palestine and the surrounding countries. Following the conquest of Alexander the Great, Greek influences had streamed into this region from all sides. Even during the Maccabean period, when the

Jews temporarily secured political independence, they were in constant intercourse with their neighbors and some of their leaders were almost as truly Greek as Jewish in their cultural interests. When Palestine was taken over by the Romans in 63 B.C., these cosmopolitan influences only accumulated momentum. Jewish society, in its formal aspects, still maintained in rigid fashion its own distinctive institutions and never abandoned its ideal of racial integrity and independence. But at the same time the Jews even in Palestine were unable to escape frequent and close contacts with the foreigner. The Jewish purist could not so much as visit the market place in Jerusalem without involving himself in the embarrassment of ceremonial contamination through rubbing elbows with Gentiles. Also the people of Galilee, particularly those who resided in or near the principal cities such as Sepphoris, Capernaum, or Tiberias, would find themselves in almost constant contact with peoples of non-Jewish blood.

Extensive contacts with foreigners resulted also from the wide dispersion of the Jewish people about the Mediterranean. By the beginning of the Christian Era there were

undoubtedly as many Jews residing in Egypt as in Palestine itself. In Syria and southern Asia Minor probably there were as many more, and, though less numerous in the West, they were everywhere in evidence. In all foreign countries they maintained their own customs, established their own distinctive type of society, and retained loyalty to their Jewish ancestry. It was their ambition to return to the Holy Land as frequently as possible, and Jerusalem was as truly a sacred city for a Jew in Spain as for one in Palestine.

Notwithstanding wide contacts with outside influences, Jewish society still exhibited a remarkable degree of stability secured through the maintenance of elaborate institutions for controlling social attitudes and activities, and insuring the perpetuation of traditional values. It is not easy, however, to estimate adequately even for Palestine itself the varied forces that were operating among the masses to determine the character of the social fabric as it took shape in real life in different parts of the territory and among different classes of people. A complexity of forces must have produced a variety of reactions, and not withstanding the well-established forms of control and direction

that were popularly assumed to be sufficient for all needs, there must have been in many quarters a large amount of unrest and uncertainty. The stimuli of the age were too numerous to admit of an absolutely quiescent social status.

Particularly within the political sphere did Palestinian society in the early decades of the Christian Era manifest elements of restlessness. The pent-up forces of dissatisfaction that were ultimately to produce the disastrous revolt against Rome in the year 66 were already in evidence. The hope of the Jewish people, who had long cherished unfulfilled expectations that God would intervene on their behalf to give them national supremacy, was again ready to reassert itself in vigorous fashion. The delay in realizing their desires was taken by some to imply that they themselves had been negligent in aggressiveness, and that God was awaiting an expression on their part of willingness to take up the sword and fight for deliverance. Others pursued a less militaristic policy. They would wait upon God with all the fidelity of their ancestors, performing in most punctilious fashion all their duties toward him, in order to win his favor for the nation. But in either

case, all parties were agreed that the status of society needed changing, and that the full energies of one's life should be directed toward the accomplishment of this end.

II

A concrete expression of the desire for social change appeared in the movement inaugurated by John the Baptist. The specific program proposed by him for bringing about a new order was the assumption of new attitudes on the part of the Jewish people. His fundamental aim was, not to elaborate a new teaching or to set forth any new creed, but to inspire in his hearers a new attitude of devotion and consecration to the ideals of their Jewish inheritance. He chose his imagery from the contemporary expectations of a new social order to be set up through the catastrophic intervention of the Deity. In conformity with these apocalyptic hopes, John predicted an early action by God to execute judgment upon sinners to wipe out present evils, and to reconstitute society, even Jewish society within Palestine, in new form in accordance with the ideals of purity and triumph that had long been cherished by the Jewish people.

John's method of procedure was characteristically Jewish, in that he adopted the rôle of a reforming prophet. He called upon his hearers to repent in order that by a kind of sympathetic procedure they might anticipate, even under existing conditions, the realization of the new age. As an expression of their determination to assume this new attitude, they performed the rite of baptism. This symbol of purification, if indeed the act itself was not felt to have purificatory significance, and their withdrawal from the ordinary walks of life to form a separatist community in the wilderness, constituted the visible and outward marks of the new society. Thus they were preparing themselves for the advent of that new divine order of things which represented for pious Jews their ideals of renewal, both within and without, for the individual and for the group, and which roughly constituted the content of the familiar phrase, "the kingdom of God."

Among those who responded to John's call for reconsecration to God was one named Jesus (Joshua), a carpenter of Nazareth. That the disturbed conditions of the times would have made a rather deep impression upon his life is easily understood. His occupation was one

that had not allowed him a great amount of leisure in which to cultivate the interests and attitudes of the professional religious class, and his residence in a comparatively unknown Galilean village had left him perhaps to an unusual extent socially undetermined by the more formal institutions of Judaism. Of course he had received a characteristic elementary education in connection with the synagogue and the schools, and was familiar with the story of his people's history, including undoubtedly a knowledge of their struggle for freedom, as well as a full awareness of the political discontent prevailing in Palestine at the time.

But for Jesus, as for many others particularly in Galilee, the prescribed ordinances of Jewish religion had not been pursued with that diligence and consistency necessary to produce an attitude of perfect confidence in these performances to meet the religious demands of the hour. In other words, Jesus, and probably others who went to hear John, represented a type of social attitude that had not been brought to rest by habitual religious ceremonies. The circumstances in which these people lived had been such as to make impossible the pursuit in great detail of those religious prescriptions which

might have quieted their minds and given them an attitude of confidence in the future, a confidence resting upon the maintenance in proper fashion of the existing social mechanisms.

Even the meager formalities of John's movement seemed soon to have proved unsatisfactory to Jesus. Apparently he heartily espoused John's cause, so far as it represented a new attitude of consecration and a renewal of confidence in God's readiness to deliver his people. But the program which John followed, of holding himself aloof from the ordinary walks of life and requiring those who would hear his message to resort to him in the wilderness where they might receive a formal baptism at his hands, was not adopted by Jesus. He, along with a few likeminded friends, pursued a new line of action. Instead of imposing upon others the responsibility of visiting some remote region in order that they might come in contact with him, he took his stand in the midst of society, where he might conduct an aggressive propaganda on behalf of his new interests.

This aggressive policy of Jesus had its advantageous as well as its disastrous possibilities. It gave him a much wider range of social contacts than would have been available had he

followed the plan of John. But at the same time it greatly augmented the possibilities of opposition. In John's case, the fact that certain persons would trouble themselves to visit him implied beforehand a measure of sympathy with his attitudes and interests, while the method of Jesus brought him into more immediate touch, not only with prospective friends but also with potential enemies.

The impression made by Jesus upon his contemporaries was so unusually forceful that it aroused a violent opposition which presently cut short his public career. While the main interests and aims which he and his friends represented were genuinely Jewish in character, the methods which they advocated for realizing their desires aroused vigorous hostility. The general content of Jesus' religious ideal of a kingdom of God, to be ushered in as a result of preparation on the part of the people through reconsecration and a heightening of their moral and spiritual sincerities, was not at all out of harmony with current Jewish interests. Rather it was the unconventional methods by which Jesus sought to bring these results to pass that constituted the real basis of opposition between him and his contemporaries. The problem at

issue was not so much the question of what end was to be sought, as of the safe path to be pursued in order to arrive at the desired goal. It was on this problem of safe procedure that Jesus and his enemies came to deadly grips.

For centuries the religious leaders among the Jews of Palestine had been building up an elaborate machinery for the cultivation and preservation of religious values. As a result of these devoted efforts on the part of successive generations, society was equipped with a body of well-established institutions highly prized by the great majority of the people, who gave themselves zealously to the support of their religion, confident that their revered institutions had been divinely authenticated and were absolutely essential for the safety of society. Its duly appointed leaders had received a prescribed course of training and were thought to derive their wisdom from a sacred literature believed to contain all directions necessary for the safe conduct of life. One should not fail to appreciate the feeling of responsibility that rested upon these authenticated guardians of the common good and the sense of assurance resulting from devotion to their established institutions. As official protectors of the people's welfare, they

undoubtedly felt in duty bound to preserve their institutions intact, while at the same time they entertained a very firm conviction that any other course of procedure would involve danger.

Jesus was not a member of the scribal profession and consequently did not share its psychology. While he had been laboring at the carpenter's bench, the rabbis had been devoting their time to study in the professional schools, and to the practice of their profession along regularly constituted lines. Their situation had been of just the proper sort to engender in them a feeling of sanctity for the established institutions as such. On the other hand, Jesus had been enveloped by conditions which, while not necessarily creating distrust, had not produced the same high estimate of inherent worth attaching to the traditional mechanisms of an established religion. Probably the fundamental ground of opposition between him and the contemporary religious leaders lay in the fact of his failure to appreciate their feeling toward the established social structure. He had not received that professional training necessary to produce the attitude of mind which emphasizes the importance of a traditional technique for the preservation of values.

When Jesus set himself up as a leader of the people, his direct and spontaneous procedure inevitably aroused the suspicion of those who had been trained by a different method, who had a different attitude, and who consequently held a different opinion regarding the way in which the values of life were to be secured. To the professional scribes Jesus cannot have seemed other than a menace to the welfare of Jewish society. His lack of deference toward methods which custom had decreed to be correct procedure in matters of religion must have been cause for deep anxiety on the part of those who felt themselves intrusted with the responsibilities of religious leadership. That they would be hostile to Jesus and make a very conscious and sincere effort to resist his work was, under the circumstances, a foregone conclusion. To them he must have appeared in the light of a dangerous non-conformist, who by unauthenticated modes of conduct was undermining the very foundation of the religious superstructure and thereby endangering the welfare of the whole Jewish race.

As Jesus persisted in his methods his opponents became more firm in their conviction of the danger involved in his activity. With

the strengthening of their opposition, he and his group were placed more distinctly on the defensive and forced to assume the rôle of a discordant element in society. But the conflict was an unequal one. The sentiment of the majority naturally favored the preservation of the existing institutions and any individual or minor group that seemed to threaten the well-being of society by disregard for the customs, or even by an attitude of non-conformity, could appear only as a menace whose removal alone would insure safety.

Just as in a modern society, if one were to set one's self against an established method of procedure in the realm of medicine, legal practice, or politics, one would immediately be regarded as a menace to the common welfare and consequently a proper object for arrest and punishment, so in the situation of Jesus where religion was the all-embracing interest of society, a vigorous hostile action was the normal consequence of his open non-conformity. Much misunderstanding has been current, especially in Christian circles of later times, regarding the motives that inspired Jesus' enemies, and the real nature of their procedure against him, nor will the problem be correctly

solved until it has been viewed in the light of the contemporary social psychology.

Political conditions within Jewish society added to the embarrassment of Jesus. The desire of the Jews for national independence from Rome had already prompted the revolution of Judas of Galilee in the year 6 A.D., and undoubtedly many persons were hopeful of the early appearance of a new leader who would be more successful. Whenever any individual attracted public attention, as did John the Baptist or Jesus, there were followers ready to ask whether this might not be the one to whom they could look for a long-desired deliverance. In all probability Jesus' earlier popularity had been partially due to the presence of such hopes among the common people of Galilee. On the other hand, it is apparent that Jesus himself never seconded these ambitions, and on occasion very definitely expressed himself as out of harmony with the revolutionists. When this fact became definitely known among his sympathizers many turned away from him and thus reduced the strength of his popular following.

The Romans were well aware of the political ambitions of the Jews, and were always ready to nip in the bud any movement toward revolu-

tion. Probably Josephus is right in informing his readers that hostile action against John the Baptist had been prompted by a suspicion on the part of Herod Antipas that John might use his popularity for political purposes. Undoubtedly the predisposition of the Roman officials toward Jesus would be colored by a similar attitude of suspicion. At any rate, it would not be difficult for his religious enemies to persuade the Roman authorities to act on the ground of safeguarding the political order. And that Jesus himself might be a potential revolutionist could very well have seemed a possibility even to his Jewish opponents, especially if they were of the quietist party who opposed political agitation and regretted the disposition of the Galileans to instigate rebellion. Jesus' appearance at Jerusalem with a band of enthusiastic followers to attend the Passover feast might readily have aroused suspicion on the part not only of his Jewish contemporaries but also of the Roman authorities. Action, accordingly, was speedy. The menace was removed by the crucifixion of Jesus on the ground that he was dangerous to the political safety and had more or less openly been instigating the people to revolution.

III

With the arrest and execution of Jesus his followers temporarily disbanded. They had come with him from Galilee to attend the feast and when misfortune overtook their leader they beat a hasty retreat to their homes. The disciples had not yet become sufficiently well organized to preserve their integrity as a group, or to constitute an element of discord in society. After the leader himself had been removed the opponents of Jesus seem not to have regarded his followers as a danger. Hostility toward them arose at a later date, but in a quite new form and motivated by entirely new causes.

During the weeks following Jesus' death, groups of his former friends reassembled. In addition to the cementing influence resulting from memory of their master, they had now acquired a new conviction regarding the program that was to be followed in realizing the Jewish hope of a new social order. If Jesus upon earth had failed to inaugurate a new régime, it was still possible that he might function as the restorer of a better day by an early return from heaven, where now he was believed to reside in messianic dignity at God's right hand. Consequently such of his former

disciples as found themselves ready to adopt this new program of reform in preparation for the advent of the Messiah constituted themselves into a group of propagandists on behalf of this new interest. They maintained that the safety of the Jewish people could be insured only through the adoption of their program for bringing about the advent of the kingdom of God.

Thus the disciples of the Nazarene represented, in their own estimation, the true Judaism within Judaism. They were in full sympathy with Jewish heritages and hopes. They betrayed at the outset no lack of harmony with the traditional interests of the Jewish nation, and they regarded themselves as the principal element of safety within Jewish society. Accordingly they thought it their duty to bring all of their kinsmen into line with their own special attitudes and ideals. Fully convinced that only by this method of procedure would it be possible to secure for the Jewish nation the realization of its hopes, they gave themselves to a vigorous missionary activity on behalf of their distinctive interests.

The principal group of these agitators resided in Jerusalem. As occasion offered,

either at the public meetings in the synagogue, or in private conversation with individuals, they sought to win allegiance to their cause. They invited their kinsmen to join their company and thus to form a nucleus of faithful ones, especially prepared and set apart by the initatory rite of baptism, ready to receive Jesus when he should appear to establish the kingdom of God in accordance with the contemporary apocalyptic type of Jewish hope. The enthusiasm which these propagandists displayed, and their zeal in rendering honor to their crucified leader, presently aroused the hostility of their neighbors. Yet they punctiliously adhered to the established customs of Jewish society and as a rule were able to pursue their own peculiar interests unmolested.

A measure of success attended the new movement, yet its membership remained relatively small in comparison with the great mass of the Jewish population. It failed to make any large place for itself in society. While the principal assembly was at Jerusalem, undoubtedly there were other groups at various places in Judea, as well as in Samaria and in Galilee, but their cause never showed any promise of unique success among the people of Palestine.

The fabric of Jewish society had become too firmly determined and habitual ways of procedure too well established to permit the successful formation of a new movement even though it might vary from the old but slightly in its details. The majority preferred to follow an established program and to rest their hopes upon habitual performances rather than to venture upon new ways of conduct and action which to them no doubt seemed quite as likely to result in disaster as in success.

Probably the new religious sect would have passed into oblivion within a few years, had it restricted its activities exclusively to Palestine. But it soon spread to other areas where it found a more responsive environment. At an early stage in its history it won adherents among the Jews of the Dispersion. Even before it drew to itself Saul of Tarsus, its most famous convert from the Diaspora, it is quite possible that the new group in Syrian Antioch and in Damascus might have outnumbered the community of disciples in Jerusalem. At any rate, in the early thirties Damascus had become so significant a center of the new sect that its most zealous persecutor selected this region for his activities.

Apparently the earliest knowledge of the new movement was carried to the Diaspora by visitors returning from Jerusalem. From its Palestinian champions they had caught the new enthusiasm. To Jews residing in a gentile environment where reverence for heroes was a familiar fact, loyalty to a heaven-exalted Messiah, who had previously lived upon earth and humbly labored for the benefit of humanity, might not seem quite so strange as to Palestinians. Nor was the life of the Hellenistic Jew so completely enmeshed in the details of prescribed ceremonies that no room was left for the favorable appraisal of a new program such as the disciples of Jesus were advocating. Under these circumstances, the prospects of success were from the very start somewhat more promising among the Jews of the Dispersion than among their kinsmen in Palestine.

But even among the Hellenistic Jews the new sect was not destined to win any phenomenal triumph. In every synagogue whither its missionaries went they met opposition, and the number of converts whom they attracted was always relatively small in comparison with the majority who rejected their appeals. Diligently as they might labor, their success was

restricted within comparatively narrow limits. If they had not reached forth into a wider field, seeking a following from among the Gentiles, their cause would have remained in comparative obscurity. As a whole, Jewish society, whether of Palestine or of the Dispersion, was too adequately supplied with existing machinery for the accomplishment of its desires, and too thoroughly established in traditional ways of procedure, to be attracted by the novelties of a new program.

In the meantime a closer contact with Gentiles had been gradually realized. The Judaism of the Dispersion had already attracted to itself a number of gentile admirers. The antiquity of Jewish religion, its monotheistic propaganda, and its ethical idealism had proved interesting to many outsiders who might attend the meetings for worship in the synagogue. While a few of these sympathizers became actual proselytes, the majority contented themselves with following at a greater distance. These "God-fearers," as they are called in the early Christian literature, offered the followers of Jesus their best opportunity to obtain a gentile hearing. Undoubtedly it was from among this group, already familiar with the Jewish religion,

that the early Christian movement drew its first gentile disciples.

An increasingly closer contact with the gentile environment soon became the most significant phase in the development of Christianity's history. It was from the Gentiles that the new movement received the distinctive name "Christianity," by which it has been known throughout the centuries. Increasingly it drew its adherents from purely gentile circles, while its Jewish membership gradually declined. Even in the forties at Antioch in Syria the Christian group apparently was composed of Jews and Gentiles in about equal numbers. Among the churches of Asia, where Barnabas and Paul worked on their so-called first missionary journey, evidently the large majority of the converts secured were non-Jews. In fact, the presence of Gentiles early became so conspicuous a fact in the history of the movement that a definite problem arose as to their status, in comparison with that of a Jewish Christian. In order to attain equality of privilege and safety in the group must Gentiles submit to the rite of circumcision as prescribed in the Law of Moses? At first the spontaneous process by which the new Christian societies arose swept

Jewish and gentile converts together in a life of common interests without any heed to theoretical problems or any thought of rival qualifications among its members. It was the growing predominance of Gentiles within the movement that gave occasion for the debate about circumcision, and the fact that a negative decision prevailed is but an added evidence of the extent to which Christianity had already become predominantly gentile.

Henceforth the gentile field offered Christians their only hope of success. Their efforts to win Jewish adherents proved increasingly futile, and the present Jewish membership gradually diminished in numbers and importance in comparison with the gentile converts. Soon the most flourishing Christian communities were to be found, not in Palestine, but on gentile soil, and were composed mainly if not exclusively of gentile members. To be sure, Christians retained many heritages that had been derived from Judaism. The Scriptures, the memory of Jesus and his work, many ideas and customs, as well as a wide range of ethical ideals, represent very substantial survivals derived from the Christian movement's Jewish antecedents. But its prospects of further

success now lay exclusively in its power to perpetuate itself through appeal to the non-Jewish population of the Roman Empire. Unless it had been able to integrate itself successfully as a movement in gentile society, its hope of survival would have been vain.

IV

To a casual observer at this period, standing outside the Christian community, the prospects of the new religion's success must have seemed exceedingly doubtful. Outsiders commonly viewed it as a new oriental cult, and more specifically as a sect of Judaism. The Jews had never been socially popular among Gentiles, and even the measure of favor which they had formerly enjoyed was greatly diminished in consequence of the tendency toward revolt that manifested itself not only in Palestine, but sometimes also among Jews of the Dispersion, during the first and second centuries of the present era. From the standpoint of popular regard among Gentiles, Christianity's Jewish antecedents were on the whole liabilities rather than assets. Tacitus is but expressing respectable Roman opinion of the first decade of the second century when he speaks of Christianity as a pernicious superstition that originated in Judea and came

to Rome along with other things terrible and disgraceful that flow into the city as a result of its contact with the East.

Still another serious handicap under which the Christian missionaries labored was the presence in their gentile environment of so many rival religions. All about them was a veritable welter of religious cults offering to their devotees a wide variety of satisfactions and presenting a great many different forms of appeal. There was hardly a single area of interest that had not been already cultivated by some older cult. If Christianity were to succeed, it must learn the secret of making headway against these numerous and well-intrenched rivals. It came as the last among this host of competitors, and lacked the prestige of antiquity which many of them enjoyed. Moreover, they operated under the aegis of a social respectability made secure through their connection with the state, or through the honor that had been paid them by art and literature. There was perhaps no respect in which, from the standpoint of the casual observer, Christianity would not have seemed to be entirely at a disadvantage.

Even those religious values which Christians carried over from Judaism were no longer

unknown to Gentiles. For centuries Jews had been present everywhere in the Mediterranean world and had established their synagogues at all the principal centers of population. Wherever Jews went they carried their own customs and became missionaries for their faith. Hellenistic Jewish scholars, such as Philo of Alexandria, had also been diligent in presenting their ancestral religion to their gentile contemporaries. Yet in spite of all forms of Jewish propaganda the Gentiles had been very slow to accept Judaism. Proselytes were secured, but not in any large numbers. The gentile world as a whole had already made up its mind to reject Judaism, not because it was unfamiliar with that faith, but because it was too familiar. Consequently there was no novelty about the elements of Judaism which the Christian movement presented in its appeal for gentile converts. And if Judaism in its original form had failed to make itself acceptable to the Roman world at large, how could Christians hope to carry on a successful propaganda when they were viewed by their contemporaries as a minor sect of Judaism?

The Christian cause was further inconvenienced by the early development of open

hostility to the movement. Perhaps no religion in the ancient world suffered an equal measure of severe and persistent opposition. While the Jews were occasionally treated with hostility, the antiquity of their religion and their numbers in society gave them a standing to which Christians could not lay claim. It was many years before they were sufficiently numerous to command social recognition by virtue of their mere presence in a community. In practically every place where Christianity first appeared it was regarded as socially disreputable, and was subjected to criticism and sometimes to violence from both Jewish and gentile elements in the environment.

The combined hostility of Jewish and gentile neighbors often placed Christians in very embarrassing situations. On occasion they were ordered to cease holding their meetings, they were placed in the position of outlaws, and sometimes were even condemned to death. Helpful as these experiences may have been for purging and strengthening the membership of the early Christian groups from within, and great as may have been outside admiration for Christian fortitude, persecution always advertised in a conspicuous way Christianity's lack

of social respectability and diverted the interest of many persons who otherwise might have been attracted to the new movement. At the outset hostility whether from the populace or from the officials unquestionably constituted a serious hindrance to the advance of Christianity as a missionary religion in the gentile world.

Notwithstanding these and all other obstacles that blocked the way to success, the new religion proved to be a formidable competitor among its rivals, and in the course of the years outdistanced them all. By the end of the second century it had built up for itself a fairly numerous following, and had drawn into its membership men of talent and culture who defended it vigorously against opponents. During the next century it added to its strength and momentum in various directions, until in the early part of the fourth century it was declared by imperial decree to possess equal rights with all other religions of the Empire. Henceforth it rapidly grew in favor. Before the close of the fourth century it was made the legal religion of the Roman state, while all its rivals were proscribed.

If one were not so familiar with this fact of history, its really arresting character might be

more fully appreciated. How a movement which began among Jews, yet failed to gain any substantial following either in Palestine or in the Dispersion and was popularly regarded at the outset by Gentiles as a despised Jewish cult, could in the course of forty years become predominantly a gentile movement, and in course of the years that followed come to be the only legal religion of the Roman world at large, is one of the riddles of history that has tested the skill of many an interpreter to solve. This triumph of Christianity is an astounding fact, and the secret of its success is an alluring problem.

The explanation most frequently advanced to account for the phenomenal triumph of Christianity in the ancient world stresses the content of the Christian message. A similar explanation is also offered to account for the failure of the Jews to respond favorably to the appeal of the early Christian missionaries. But whether one can obtain an adequate view of the facts conditioning Christianity's failure among the Jews and success among the Gentiles by exclusive emphasis upon the content of the new religion's teachings is a serious question. That it advocated a distinctive message and

that its preachers often stressed indoctrination are indubitable facts, but that a message presumed to be the same in each case should fail in one setting and succeed in another is explicable only on the basis of a more ultimate analysis of conditions within the environing society. Moreover, closer scrutiny arouses a suspicion that even the Christian message was not immune from certain changes of importance that marked its history at different periods in the development of the movement.

While it is very true that the preaching of the Christian leaders in Palestine failed to win the approval of their Jewish contemporaries, the reason for the failure becomes apparent only when one comprehends the nature of the Jewish society within which the new movement sought to win a place. Had the social structure of Judaism been more fluid, had its habits been less firmly fixed and its attitudes less definitely controlled by a well-established mechanism, a very different outcome might have resulted from the efforts of the Christian propagandists. But Jewish society had become too firmly crystallized, and the interests of the people were too definitely under control to furnish any appreciable opportunity for the success of a

new movement, quite apart from the question as to the merits or defects of its specific doctrines.

Moreover, why should a message whose success is assumed to be insured by its own inherent character fail among Jews and triumph among Gentiles? Even had the Christian preaching in gentile lands continued to be an exact reproduction of the Palestinian type, it would still have been necessary for one to look to the gentile environment for the real secret of the new movement's success. Every preacher knows that his gospel does not always prosper just because it is the gospel; only where the seed falls on fertile soil does it spring up to successful fruitage. Not merely the unique content of the Christian teaching, but rather the character of the gentile response was in the last analysis determinative for the outcome of the historical process. And this response depended upon a number of complex conditions inherent in gentile society. Just because this society was constituted in a particular way at the beginning of the Christian Era was it possible for Christianity as a new movement to secure a degree of success denied to it in a Jewish environment where social conditions were of a distinctly different character.

Furthermore, the Christian movement, by lack of a predetermined social structure of its own, enjoyed an unusual advantage in comparison with other religions of longer standing. It came into the gentile world while still in its nascent stage, with but few traditional heritages and in a form as yet largely undetermined in detail. Had it appeared upon the scene full grown, its chance of success would have been greatly minimized. But it was still in its early youth, and therefore capable of responding more readily to new stimuli and able to shape its form in accordance with the demands of the gentile world, where it was henceforth to make its home, and amid whose life it was to perform its own distinctive functions.

One should remember, of course, that Christianity was a vital aggressive movement, and not a mere plastic entity to be molded at random by contacts from without. Indeed it exhibited the play of some very significant forces from within, but these vital energies of the movement emanated not from some impersonal source such as a set of teachings, a body of ritual, or a type of ecclesiastical organization. Rather the source of energy was living individuals who cherished vital interests and mani-

fested specific attitudes in their life together within the communities. In the last analysis, these personal interests and attitudes, as expressed in the activities of the group, were the really determining factors conditioning the character of the Christian society. Not isolated individuals, but persons banded together in a social unit, defined their dogmas and created their institutions to suit their common religious needs as these needs were directly determined by the momentum of specific heritages, the stimuli of concrete environments, and the interplay of personal reactions.

With these facts in mind, one may no longer hope to restore the history of Christianity's beginnings by exclusive attention to static products—or by-products—that are borne along more or less conspicuously upon the surface of the ongoing stream of history. It is necessary to recognize that gentile Christianity, just because of its greater success in comparison with the Christianity of Palestine, was to an even greater degree socially conditioned and socially motivated. The key to its success must be sought in the story of how the Christian movement as a vital factor in the social process met human needs, satisfied special interests,

developed distinctive attitudes, cherished peculiar ideals, devised definite forms of control, threw up a specific structure, and evolved such other instrumentalities as were felt to be necessary for the realization of its members' wishes. The rise of Christianity on gentile soil, as truly as in a Jewish environment, becomes explicable only when its history is read in the light of actual social origins. The conditions characteristic of the environment and the vital interests of the Christian groups are the elemental facts of primary concern to the historian.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST WITHIN GENTILE SOCIETY

Christianity at the outset made almost no impression upon the gentile world at large. The converts who espoused the new movement were comparatively few in number and belonged to the lower classes of society. In the early days not even the most ardent Christian missionary expected to win any large following from among the upper classes. God, it was said, had not called many of the wise, the mighty, and the noble of the Roman Empire, but had chosen rather those who were accounted weak and foolish, to constitute the elect membership of the Christian groups. Even after the movement had been in course of progress for a generation or more, its advocates still sought consolation in quoting sayings of Jesus to the effect that few were to be saved. The great majority were thought to be destined to travel the broad way that led unto death, while only a small and select company would enter in at the strait gate of the Christian hope that led unto life.

This skepticism of the Christians regarding the prospects of winning large numbers of gentile converts cannot have rested upon any assumption that the Gentiles were not deeply interested in religion. All about them early Christians saw their heathen neighbors involved in multitudinous religious activities, widely varied in type and pervading the whole of society. Among all classes, from the most lowly individual to the highest official in the state, sacred rites were matters of lively concern and were diligently observed. Not because Gentiles were so irreligious, but rather because they were so hopelessly devoted to forms of religion that seemed to the Christian preacher false and satanic, did he despair of pagan society and content himself with rescuing a few chosen souls from the general ruin. As the earliest Christians viewed the situation, the heathen were too thoroughly wedded to their idols and too completely given over to the service of demons to be won in any large numbers for the true religion.

Yet Christians did not cease their missionary activities, nor were their efforts unattended by a considerable measure of success. The new propaganda proved much more effective in

attracting converts than had originally seemed possible even to its most ardent advocates. In the course of the years it drew to itself gentile adherents in larger and larger numbers, who found in the new religion satisfaction for their various religious needs and made their several contributions toward determining the character and constitution of the developing Christian society. Even the skepticism of a Tertullian, who believed that it would be impossible for a Caesar to become a Christian, was ultimately to be denied.

What was the distinctive type of gentile religious quest which Christianity thus proved itself capable of satisfying? Acquaintance with the religious interests and activities that pervaded Graeco-Roman society during the period of Christianity's gradual rise to a position of popularity and strength within the Roman Empire is a matter of prime importance for an understanding of the new religion itself.

I

The unification of the Empire under Augustus meant the dawn of a new social order for the Roman world. Yet the new conditions did not emerge suddenly, but were

in fact merely the outcome of tendencies that had been present within the Mediterranean world for the two previous centuries. From the time that Rome began her commercial conquests resulting in the overthrow of her rival, Carthage, the trend of social history had been moving in this direction. Indeed, the same type of influence had been operative in the East ever since the time of Alexander the Great.

Roman society had a very distinct physical basis in the geographical conditions of the ancient world as now unified under the imperial régime. The road-building policy of the government opened up avenues for the movement of people from one end of the Empire to the other. Also the Mediterranean, now that it had been cleared of pirates, offered well-beaten sea routes for trade between important centers of commerce. Over these highways, both by land and by sea, a varied and voluminous traffic was in constant motion. The state sent its officials and its armies to every part of the Empire. Traders in all kinds of wares carried on their business in truly cosmopolitan fashion. Artisans, adventurers, and pleasure-seekers moved about freely from place to place in quest of opportunities to satisfy their

distinctive interests. Geographically, Roman society may be said to have become a close-knit fabric, thanks to the elaborate means of communication that were maintained under the protection of the state.

One important social consequence of these easy intercontacts was the free mingling of peoples of different races and different cultural heritages. Within the Roman army, among the slaves of the same household, or in the marts of the great cities, a man from Gaul might find himself side by side with a Jew, an Egyptian, a Syrian, or a Greek. A traveling salesman from Alexandria might journey in the company of a man of Asia or India. At the wharves of Ephesus, Tarsus, Alexandria, Puteoli, or Brundisium, men of all races and nations met and mingled. Distinctive national characteristics, difference in speech, and diversity of religious and cultural inheritances gradually gave way before the pressure of new interests called into being by the exigencies of new conditions.

A new type of social experience was inevitable. Often the individual must have felt himself sadly adrift upon this vast sea of complex Roman society. In the home of his

fathers he had lived in a narrow environment where he was surrounded by traditional securities, and where his means of earning a livelihood had been assured through long custom in the practice of some profession or the pursuit of some trade. The local gods who had protected his ancestors down through the ages were also believed to protect him. But now he had broken his traditional moorings and had fared forth upon the highways of the Mediterranean world seeking his fortune, or his fate. Sometimes his efforts were attended with a measure of success, but often they were met by severe defeats. The quest for food, for shelter, and for those things that bring one a taste of life's pleasures now depended for its realization primarily upon the initiative and effort of the individual himself. He was thrown upon his own responsibility, with the inevitable result that he sought new helps and new securities appropriate to the new environment.

Thus began a gradual abandonment of the older guaranties that had previously been trusted to insure life's satisfactions. Time-honored customs that had served the purposes of one's father and grandfather in one's native land could no longer be perpetuated

under the conditions amid which an emigrant from Syria or Egypt found himself when he became a trader, merchant, or artisan, traveling about the Roman Empire at large. He confronted problems and faced dangers which could not be adequately met by appeal to older sanctions. In his present situation he needed new norms to guide his action, new aids to insure his success, and new consolations to sustain him in the hour of defeat. Old sanctions, old controls, old forms of guaranty were gradually supplanted, as the new society shaped its own appropriate course and threw up a social structure adapted to its distinctive needs. The individual made new friendships, he joined new societies, he attached himself to new types of religion, he acquired new forms of experience, and he became in a sense a new man.

Roman society exhibited a wide range of variation in its constituent parts. The aristocracy formed a definite class by itself and continued to pursue its quests along well-established lines. Many persons found time to devote themselves to cultural interests in the field of philosophy, literature, or art. The aristocrats and the intellectuals did not, however, come to close grips with life in the same way in which

the common man found it necessary to grapple with the problem of existence. It was in his experience, which was that of the rank and file, that the business of living took on its true seriousness, and involved him and his companions in a perpetual struggle to come to terms with a none too friendly environment. Together they constituted one onflowing stream of humanity, with distinctive wishes, aspirations, and strivings, that lured them on to new forms of social activity in their efforts to attain the desired ends of life.

II

The people of the Roman Empire were fairly well equipped with devices for the control and perpetuation of social values. Education had effectively increased man's skill and ability for accomplishing life's work. Nor was the ancient world without a considerable measure of practical science. Mechanical knowledge was by no means wanting, and numerous useful inventions were known. A high degree of efficiency was displayed in the acquisition of food, clothing, and shelter. Agriculture, industry, trade, and commerce were carried on in such fashion as to meet, in a comparatively

adequate way, the needs of the time. The science of legislation and government had received careful attention, and had been developed to a stage where they furnished effective protection for society. Nor had the recreational side of life been ignored. The theater, the ampitheater, the circus, the stadium, all afforded ample opportunity for entertainment and diversion. Cultural interests had also found satisfaction in the cultivation of literature, painting, architecture, and sculpture. In short, Roman society was measurably well provided with agencies for yielding a large amount of satisfaction over a wide range of quests.

The natural securities which society had thrown up for its protection did not, however, give complete satisfaction to all persons. There was a wide area of experience in which it was felt that still greater securities were needed to establish completely safe relations with the environment. Those adjustments and arrangements which man himself made on his own authority, and by means of his own skill, were felt to be inadequate for the larger needs. Consequently resort was had to another area of authority—the supernatural. People be-

lieved themselves to be living in a world that was controlled by higher powers whose anger might be incurred, or whose favor might be secured through man's own action. Thus man stood not only in social relationships with his own fellows whom he met daily in the ordinary contacts of life, but his environment also involved him in relationships with occult powers. If an order of society were to be established that would be in all respects secure, it must include in its scheme not only man's fellow-beings, and those means of help and control which the ingenuity of man might devise, but also the powers of the unseen world.

Supernatural forces were believed to touch life over a wide area of experience. For a skeptical Epicurean like Lucretius this belief in the supernatural was a frightful blight upon Roman society. In his eyes religion was a crushing load that lay like a nightmare upon the human soul, which "even now is implanting in morals a shuddering awe which raises new temples of the gods over the whole earth, and prompts men to crowd them on festive days." The pains which had been taken by the people of the ancient world to establish rites that would provide safe relations with these other worldly

powers, seemed to Lucretius nothing but a great misfortune which had overtaken the hapless race of men. In words of expostulation he cried, "What groanings did they then beget for themselves, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children!"

Lucretius knew right well how prevalent those beliefs were against which he was making his vivid protest, for he himself affirmed: "Who is there whose mind does not shrink into itself with fear of the gods, whose limbs do not cower in terror when the parched earth rocks with the appalling thunderstroke and rattlings run through the great heaven?" (v. 1218 ff.) Intellectualizing doubts did not trouble the common man. He was concerned with feelings, desires, fears, hopes, which prompted on his part acts and attitudes, determined, not by some process of rational speculation, but by habitual procedures, inherited customs, or his own immediate emotions. Nor were even the philosophers themselves always ready to discard belief in supernatural powers as the ultimately determining factors in human experience. It was only among the Epicureans that skepticism was carried to the extreme represented in Lucretius. Others held that the wise

course of procedure was, not to eliminate the gods from human affairs, but to purify thought regarding them, to make them kindly, and to interpret the relations between the divine and the human in terms, not of fear or anger, but of affection and fellowship.

A century and a half after the time of Lucretius, Plutarch, a leader of intellectual life in the Graeco-Roman world and a younger contemporary of the gospel writers, pleads for the exercise of sanity and moderation in the sphere of religion. He denounces the atheism of the Epicureans as "reason deceived," but he likewise protests against the superstition of the times on the ground that it is a passion "arising out of false reasoning." As he looks upon the gods and demons, they are guardians of mankind's welfare and friends of mortals, who should pray to them for riches, plenty, peace, concord, and the prosperity of all good human works and actions. It is wholly erroneous to approach them in a spirit of fear or dread, since they are in reality the greatest benefactors of men. For one who understands the truth, "the majesty of God is coupled with goodness and magnificence, with strength and with protective care for men." Consequently

it is absurd to think of supernatural beings in terror and to approach them with fear, or to impute to them acts that mean punishment and misfortune. In coming into their presence man should not shudder, but should approach the altars with confidence, since the pleasantest things in life are festivals and banquets in the temples, ceremonies of initiation, sacred rites, the performance of vows, and the adoration of the images of the gods.

Plutarch's advice is that of a successful man who is able to look upon his environment without fear. To the rank and file of humanity within the Roman world fate had not been so kind. Experience to them seemed to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the supernatural forces were, on many an occasion, hostile, and that it would be sad indeed for anyone who aroused their anger even unawares. To produce an attitude of fearlessness requires a social setting in which the aspirations of life have secured a large measure of realization, or one in which defeat at present seems so inevitable that hopes are eagerly and often joyously transferred to a future realm for their realization. One might, to be sure, become so desperate as to give up all hope, as did, indeed, some

persons within the Roman world. They looked upon life as a matter of destiny which could not be changed either by service to gods or by initiative on the part of men. But along with this fatalism, which is often erroneously played up as the most characteristic feature of the times, there went a very practical activity, expressing itself in a great variety of concrete forms, as individuals endeavored to establish safe relations with an environment that was supposedly dominated by freakish, friendly or hostile, supernatural powers.

Plutarch's language is doubtless designed for effect. Nevertheless, his description of the attitude of the common man toward the great unknown about him undoubtedly contains a large measure of truth. There were hosts of people whose fear, as Plutarch says, does not allow them to make

> any truce with sleep, nor grants to the soul, even in repose, the gain of a little courage by driving off its burdensome and painful notions about the Deity, but as it were in the realms of the damned, it raises up in the sleep of the superstitious, terrific phantoms, monsters, apparitions, and tortures of all kinds. Scaring the miserable soul, it chases it out of the refuge of sleep with specters, while it is scourged and tormented by its own self, as though by the hand of another and receives troubles both dreadful and of strange sorts. And then, on awaking, the victims do not come to their

senses, nor laugh at their visionary fears, nor feel glad that nothing that had so disturbed them was a reality; but after having escaped the visionary illusion that had no charm in it, they cheat themselves over again, waste their money, and vex themselves, by rushing to fortune-tellers and such like impostors.

Even philosophy ultimately yielded to the enticements of an insidious supernaturalism. The more strenuous intellectual ideals of Epicureans and Stoics gradually gave way before the increasing popularity of that mystical emotionalism which characterized the Neopythagorean and the Neoplatonic schools. More and more even the better educated classes turned to the realm of the occult in their quest for the ultimate realities of life. Some of the best minds of the age fell under the spell of astral mysticism which intoxicated the human spirit by thought of its unity with the divinities of the starry cosmos. By a kind of self-hypnotism, induced through meditation upon the infinite, Plotinus, the principal founder of Neoplatonism, is said to have experienced in a trance actual visions of the transcendent God, "who is without shape of form, established above the understanding and all the intelligible world." But the followers of Plotinus found it easier to hold communion with

deity in visible form, and thus the popular mythologies and rites of the Graeco-Roman religions presently intrenched themselves solidly within those circles of culture to which the peoples of later Roman paganism looked for intellectual leadership.

III

Long before the rise of Christianity the society of the Mediterranean world had worked out varied and elaborate schemes of establishing safe relations between man and the mysterious elements in his environment. There existed all over the Roman Empire a multiplicity of agencies called into being by the hope that through the performance of stated rites and devotion to certain deities, different forms of supernatural aid could be assured and dangers from occult powers could be averted. These religious activities were so very numerous, widespread, and diverse in character that only a cursory summary of their functional significance is possible in the present connection.

One of the most elemental quests that called into existence definite religious ceremonies was the desire to insure the welfare of a people, a race, or residents of a particular territory.

The god functioned as protector of the tribe, the city, or the state. When the process of civilization advanced to the point where small groups of people associated themselves together in larger units, and their territories became welded into a larger whole, then their deities were likewise combined into a pantheon—a society of the gods effected by transcendentalizing the social experience of their devotees. It was by some such process that the various gods of Greece, originally tutelary deities of particular tribes or groups residing in different territories, had come to be assembled together upon Mount Olympus. They might now function in a new way as ideals for the Greek people at large, or as representatives of specific interests in their new culture. But, so far as their popular function was concerned, they still, no doubt, served a much larger number of people in their old capacity of protectors for those who dwelt within a certain area, or who worshiped at a particular shrine. Undoubtedly, for the average citizen of Athens, the city's patron goddess was far more significant as a resident of the magnificent Parthenon which had been erected in her honor than as a member of the Olympian group.

It was true of all the principal Greek deities that they were originally gods of localities, and that their chief function therefore lay in giving protection to the persons and interests in their immediate vicinity. Similarly, the religion of the ancient Romans centered about supernatural powers that were regarded as protectors of specific interests in their common life. These interests at the outset pertained mainly to the welfare of the family or of the locality in which the family or group of families lived. But with the formation of the Roman city-state, and with the growth of its activities along lines that were new in comparison with the simpler life of former days, the need for help in these new relationships constantly increased. When the food quest led Roman traders to import corn from southern Italy, Rome herself had no deity who could function as protector of the ships that brought the food, for Rome had no god of the sea. So she imported one from Greece. Again, in her wars with Carthage, when calamities had befallen Italy, and Hannibal threatened the invasion of their city, to resist the foreign foe the Romans sought help from a foreign source, and imported from Phrygia the worship of Cybele, the great mother of the gods.

In the course of time Roman society deviated widely from the primitive simplicity of earlier days and became an arena for the activity of a great array of religious cults. As Roman life had become more and more complex, with the expansion of social contacts, there went a corresponding multiplication of the supernatural assurances by which the Romans sought to surround themselves in dealing with this varied and limitless environment. By the beginning of the Christian Era, Roman religion had become as syncretistic and varied as Roman society itself. All the peoples about the Mediterranean had made their respective contributions to the complex mass of cults and ceremonies that flourished during the early Imperial Age.

The success of any particular religion within the Roman Empire depended upon the degree to which it met specific needs within the syncretistic life of the age. Many traditional deities of Greece and Rome survived primarily as guardians of the public welfare, thus answering to the quest for supernatural protection of a community or a state. This fact was still true even after a deity had wandered far from his native home, and had secured for himself a

temple and worshipers in cities within a strange land. The reverence with which the Ephesians regarded Artemis, or the devotion which the people of Pergamos rendered to Zeus, was as lively and genuine in its character as though these gods had been native products of these particular cities. So it transpired that many gods, particularly those of Greece, were called upon to protect widely scattered communities about the Mediterranean. But what really happened on many an occasion was that a local divinity, who, in a more primitive state of civilization had been regarded as an adequate protector of a community, was simply given the new name, with some of the new attributes, attaching to the more famous deity of Greece or Rome. The process often meant little more than the rebaptizing of a native god with a more distinguished name. For the rank and file of his worshipers, his significance lay, not in his name, but in the protection and benefits that accrued to the community as a result of his care.

Religious help was needed to meet a great variety of community interests. In those days, when methods of sanitation were somewhat primitive, any community might be suddenly

smitten by a devastating plague that often carried off a considerable part of the population. Or, before the days of the modern steel leviathan, a disastrous storm upon the Mediterranean might ruin all the commerce that customarily came into a certain port. Earthquakes, too, were a familiar menace to life, and a long-continued drought or a violent storm might do immeasurable damage to the food supply. Under such circumstances the help of religion was always needed to drive out the demon of pestilence, to ward off the angry god of the sea, or to prevent the destruction of crops, and to shelter people from the dangers of the earthquake.

According to the thought of the time, it was religion that furnished the surest guaranties for the general prosperity of the community. A happy and successful society meant, in the opinion of its members, a community that enjoyed the greatest measure of favor from its tutelary deity. Consequently no little civic pride manifested itself in the building and ornamentation of magnificient temples, in the appropriation of money to support priesthoods and sacrifices, and in the celebration of festive days in which the community united to do

honor to the divine powers that had furnished it protection. Periods of peace and prosperity, in contrast with times of civil war and adversity, were evidences of divine favor. When misfortunes befell society, it was not uncommon for the local authorities to make new appropriations for the restoration of the temples or the establishment of a new cult. And it was common belief that the wise course of procedure was to maintain the worship of the gods in vigorous fashion in order to avert the possibility of calamity.

Throughout the whole history of Rome's career religion was thought to be the unique source of political prosperity and stability. Pious statesmen and historians never wearied of reminding the world that the supremacy enjoyed by Rome was a reward for the piety of the people. Conversely, in times of calamity, the characteristic explanation offered in many quarters was that the gods had been offended, or that some sacred ceremony had been neglected. Time and again during the imperial period efforts were made to strengthen the foundations of the state by the revival of old religious rites, or the introduction of new cults. In the last resort, politics became ultimately a religious

problem, as the rulers in their desperation sought to secure for the government that divine protection which, according to all the traditions of the Romans, had been the original source of their political prosperity.

The religious interpretation of social experience manifested itself in a unique way within the Roman Empire, in the phenomenon known as "emperor-worship." The existence of a political dominion embracing the whole known world under a stable and seemingly permanent form of government was an awe-inspiring spectacle. A flattering inscription which hailed the birthday of Augustus as the beginning of a new age was not all mere flattery, for, to the mind of that time it was not Augustus who had accomplished this wonderful result, but a supernatural power of which Augustus was the representative or embodiment. His subjects worshiped him, not simply to gratify the vanity of a prince, but because he typified for them a social safety such as they had not experienced since many a day, and which, accordingly, seemed to them to be an expression of supernatural favor. The people of that age were no more ready to analyze scientifically the causes for a successful government than they

were to analyze in a like manner the causes of political misfortune. In their political life, safety as well as disaster was believed to be in the last resort religiously conditioned.

IV

The blessings resulting from the worship of a state god were the common property of the community. The Athenian was entitled to the protection of Athena by virtue of his birth and membership in the city-state. Every Athenian who did not forfeit his rights in the community shared exactly the same divine favor. The emotional satisfactions to be attained under such circumstances were not a distinctive possession of the individual, but were the common property of the group. So in the case of one's worship of the gods of the Roman state or of the deified emperor. The blessings derived from such ceremonies were a common possession and not an affair of special privilege for any particular individual who might be thought to deserve unusual favors as a reward for personal devotion. These types of religion offered little if any opportunity for the exercise of personal initiative or the cultivation of personal responsibility.

On the other hand, religious quests of a more personal sort were abundantly in evidence within Roman society. The need for divine assistance in the daily living of the individual was often keenly felt by many people. They sought guidance for action in moments of doubt, and enlightment for their ignorance. They desired protection from danger and recompense for their disappointments, and their successes called forth expressions of awe and gratitude in the presence of those mysterious powers which were thought to govern their lives. As individuals were swept into the currents of cosmopolitan life characteristic of imperial society, this need for personal guidance in the realm of the supernatural constantly increased. While one remained a resident in an Egyptian nome, or a peasant in a village of Syria, or a merchant in a small Greek town, one's quest might not range beyond the limits of assurance that were provided by the existing order of the community's life. But when the Egyptian, the Syrian, or the Greek strayed from his native land to become a mere fragment of humanity competing with others for a place of safety in the larger life of the Roman world as a whole, it was necessary that one's religion

should be made to render a new and much more distinctly individual type of service.

At a relatively early date this drift in the direction of the personal emphasis in religion had come distinctly into prominence throughout a wide range of experience within Roman society. A new importance attached to certain rites and religious acts performed by the individual. In earlier times oracles or other forms of divination had functioned chiefly on behalf of the state or the commuuity, but now they were resorted to by individuals as guides for the direction of personal conduct. A gentleman about to make a journey, a merchant contemplating a new enterprise, or even an emperor proposing a military expedition, consulted an oracle, appealed to a diviner, or resorted to some other approved method for obtaining occult wisdom, in order that he might determine what the indications were for success, whether the time was propitious, and what course of action should be pursued. He desired to know what the mind of the higher powers might be with reference to his personal affairs.

Even when not under the stress of a crisis, many individuals found satisfaction in the performance of certain rites of a more normal

sort. They surrounded themselves in daily life with the habitual paraphernalia of religion. They participated regularly in the religious ceremonies conducted at stated seasons, they set up altars to various gods, they adorned their homes with images, they offered the usual prayers, and they performed acts of sacrifice according to custom. Often they made special dedications in some temple in recognition of favors bestowed upon them by the gods. Such forms of religious activity were increasingly personal in their character, as bringing the individual into relation with the supernatural powers that were thought to control the ordinary course of one's daily living. It might be said of large numbers of people in the Roman world at this time that they were individually religious, and that their religious activities were as much a part of their daily interests as were their pursuits in business or pleasure.

It was in the hour of misfortune, however, that the need for help was felt most keenly. One of the most distressing calamities that befell people in the ancient world was the loss of health. When ill one might call in a physician, who employed such scientific knowledge as the age possessed for the treatment of disease.

But there were many persons who preferred to seek help from the divine powers. This quest for supernatural aid was but the counterpart of the current belief that sickness was due to the anger of a deity or to the activity of some demonic agency. Diseases, whether of the mind or of the body—and there was an abundance of both types—prompted many invalids to seek healing in religion. They acted upon the principle that those who were smitten by supernatural powers must appeal to the divinities for relief from afflictions.

The magician was believed to be one of the most effective agencies for mediating the divine help. Acting on the assumption that disease was caused by some demonic spirit resident in the unfortunate individual, in much the same way that the modern germ is said to infect a human body, the magician applied a counter infection to nullify the power of the afflicting demon. By pronouncing the name of a more powerful demon or divinity in the presence of his patient, it was thought possible to scare off the evil spirit under whose spell the sick man had fallen. The magician and his patient alike believed that this method of treatment would succeed if properly performed. The key to

success lay in employing effective formulas of adjuration. If the magician had a wide acquaintance with the names of various demonic spirits he might call to his assistance first one and then another, pronouncing the name in the presence of the patient until the desired therapeutic result was secured. Consequently he gleaned from everywhere all sorts of names believed to represent powerful demons. The success which attended his work, through collusion it was supposed with occult powers, made him a very popular figure within certain circles in the society of the Roman Empire.

Large numbers of people also sought healing by appeal to divinities who were supposed to specialize in the cure of diseases. One very famous healing god was Asklepios, whose chief shrine was at Epidauros, a few miles southeast of Corinth. At an early date the fame of this sanctuary was so widespread that people came thither for healing from all parts of the Mediterranean world. Tradition abundantly attests the beneficial effects experienced by visitors. Sometimes the god appeared to the patient while the latter slept at night in the temple, with the result that on awakening in the morning he found himself completely healed. At

other times during sleep the patient received from the god instructions which when carried out resulted in a cure. Again there were cases in which the priest or some physician connected with the sanctuary directly mediated the gift of healing. Grateful convalescents left their crutches, their canes, and their votive offerings behind them as evidence of the deity's curative power. All sorts of diseases were believed to be healed. Blindness, lameness, and paralysis were especially common maladies that seem to have received successful treatment. The religious fervor which was thus engendered made Asklepios greatly beloved and won for him the epithet, "the one who leads and controls all things, the savior of the whole world, and the guardian of mortals."

V

There were still other demands for individual satisfaction which even these cults could not meet. They left much to be desired in the realm of emotional interest and personal privileges to be secured through voluntary devotion to the deity. One who sought guidance from an oracle, or who read the will of the gods in signs and omens, was doing only what every other individual in Roman society might do

equally well and with the same hope of obtaining a favorable response. One who appealed to the magician for help could find no greater favor than would be accorded anyone else who had the magician's fee. The worshiper of Asklepios might receive healing if it was in accordance with the will of the god, but so might any other suppliant who came to Asklepios for assistance. These performances offered no opportunity for an individual to place himself in a position of special privilege by making one particular deity his own and thus securing the realization of a favored relationship with a god upon the basis of voluntary attachment and personal devotion. Such types of religion offered no means by which the personal tie between the individual and the god might be cemented in a way to give the devotee a vivid experiential assurance that a chosen god was his very own, and that he himself was the possession of a powerful deity.

Then, again, all the customary appeals might fail of their purpose. Disaster might overtake a community to which one belonged, in spite of the favor of the god for the group, and when such disaster came the individual as an individual was helpless. There was no way by

which one could help one's self, for no safety was available apart from its realization by the group as a whole. Even the appeals made to the gods for specific assistance in the various experiences of life must often have resulted in disappointment. The deities did not always bless their devotees with prosperity; they did not always heal the suppliant of his diseases; many a one who sought divine guidance went on his way to meet failure, and all men, whether they revered the gods or not, ultimately came to the same fate when overtaken by death. Was there not some other source of help to which one might go for more efficient aid which if not to be realized in this life, might be available in some other sphere of existence? The inevitable failures of the human struggle must have brought only despair unless it were possible to place one's self into relation with supernatural forces that could recompense the defeats of this life with assurances of success and happiness in another world beyond the grave.

It was in the mystery religions that the people of the Graeco-Roman world found satisfaction for such quests which the other cults were unable to furnish. When one yearned to realize a personal sense of attachment to the

supernatural world secured through some voluntary rite of initiation, it was to the mystery deities that one must turn to obtain the fulfilment of one's desires. Once the individual had passed through the stirring rites of initiation, he held as a permanent possession the memory of an emotional experience that had raised him far above the commonplace hardships of his daily life. When the burdens of his present existence grew unusually heavy he could revive the assurances of that emotional uplift which came to him as he had participated in the elaborate ceremonies of initiation. His attachment to the deity of a mystery cult meant for him not only union with a god in the present, who buoyed him up amid the misfortunes of this life, but he also felt himself to be the possessor of a new kind of life that endured beyond time and insured for him in the ages to come the inheritance of eternal bliss.

The quest for the mystery type of religious satisfaction had been so strong among the peoples of the Graeco-Roman world that for two centuries or more before the beginning of the Christian Era several different mystery cults, emphasizing one or another of these particular phases of religious value, had been

prospering and spreading widely about the Mediterranean. Greece had long been famous for its mysteries of Demeter, which originally were celebrated at Eleusis, but long since adopted by Athens as a state cult. The Eleusinian ceremonies, with their elaborate rites, had become so highly esteemed on account of the values which they were supposed to secure for the initiated that they had been sought not only by people of the lower classes, but by some of the most distinguished citizens of the ancient world, even by emperors themselves. Less popular, perhaps, but equally efficacious in bringing about the realization of a unique type of personal religious experience through rites of initiation and participation in other ceremonies of the cult were the mysteries of Dionysus. To these one might add the Samothracian, the Andanian, and similar cults of lesser fame that were well known to the Greeks and that still flourished in imperial times.

Asia also gave the Roman world several mystery religions of note. By the beginning of the Christian era Cybele and her male associate, Attis, with their orgiastic ceremonies had begun to figure prominently in the religious life of the Empire. Also the rites of another

Asiatic divinity, the Syrian goddess, as she was called, had attracted many devotees. Around the eastern end of the Mediterranean and even in Egypt the cult of Aphrodite and Adonis enjoyed a large measure of popularity. One of the most famous mystery cults came from Egypt in the form of the universally known and revered rites of the goddess Isis and her associate Osiris. To all of these there was added toward the latter part of the first century still another mystery religion of Persian origin, the cult of Mithra, who was destined to become one of the most popular gods of the Empire. It would not be a mere rhetorical figure if one were to designate the religious history of the Mediterranean world in the early imperial period as "the age of the mysteries."

The popularity of the mystery religions is easily explained. Roman society was of just the right texture to demand this particular type of religious satisfaction. Men were no longer grouped by separate races, distinct nationalities, traditional communities, or other older forms of social classification that had functioned as effective safeguards in earlier times. On the contrary, this was a period of growing individualism, with the accompanying urge toward

personal initiative and a growing sense of individual needs. The age of tradition was giving place to the age of a present-day humanity, when men craved the protection, not simply of a god who could direct the destinies of a race or a nation, but of a god who could save a human being.

Moreover, the mystery gods were by nature closely allied with humanity. They were commonly believed to have lived originally among men, where they shared in intensified form the trials to which flesh is heir. They had triumphed over death, and had been rewarded for their service to mortals by elevation to a unique position of divine power. When the worshiper, by his volitional act, allied himself with this victorious deity, he experienced a new sense of emotional uplift. He believed that he was now realistically united to this triumphant hero of the cult, a union sealed with a solemn ceremony of initiation and sometimes made doubly certain by the conviction that the deity had taken up his abode in mystical fashion within the believer. This hero-savior was now his master, guide, and defender, and was all the more capable of giving him true protection because the god himself had passed through the

most trying types of human experience, and had come off victorious. In the ceremonies of initiation the career of the hero-savior was exhibited in pantomimic form before the eye of the initiated while the priest explained the significance of the redemptive mystery.

Such, in rapid survey, were the principal forms of religious quest current in gentile society when Christianity first appeared upon the scene. Would this new oriental religion be able to meet those contemporary demands better than they were being already satisfied by the ancient cults of Greece and Rome, or by the oriental mysteries that were now functioning so extensively within the Roman world? This was the task as well as the opportunity that confronted the champions of Christianity. Could their movement be made to serve efficiently the religious demands of the age? Could it meet the current quest for a control of the supernatural powers that would render man safe in his environment? Could it supply those needs for which men were seeking satisfaction by appeal to the ancient gods, upon whom even the state depended for its security? Could it protect individuals in this present life, insuring for them success in their enterprises, protection

from demons, the healing of their diseases, and all other forms of present material blessing? Could it meet the demand for a personal religious experience that would give the devotee a consciousness of union with a human-divine hero who could truly symphathize with the misfortunes of men, and who through his own triumph, could insure to them a victory even over death, and a firm hope of bliss in a life to come? And in the course of time the new religion would be required, not only to answer these popular needs felt by the great masses of society, but also to meet the problems of the intellectuals—of the philosophers and the litterateurs. These were the tasks already set for any new movement that would make a place for itself within the complex religious life of the Roman Empire in the first century of the present era.

CHAPTER IV

THE PAULINE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Thanks to the preservation of certain letters of Paul, it is still possible to obtain a glimpse into the life of several gentile Christian communities as early as the sixth decade of the first century. Although these documents were only incidental products of the apostle's work and were not at all intended to be comprehensive histories of the period, they nevertheless contain just the type of information needed to give one first-hand acquaintance with characteristic phases in the activity of the new religious societies. Because of their intimate and personal character, they place the modern reader in immediate touch with the actual life of various Christian groups in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy, between the years 50 and 65.

Paul, to be sure, was not the only active missionary on behalf of the new religion among Gentiles. He had distinguished predecessors, contemporaries, and fellow-laborers in the persons of such prominent individuals as

Barnabas, Peter, John Mark, Timothy, Titus, and a considerable number of less well-known names. But the fortunes of history have preserved letters of Paul, while only indirect sources of information are available regarding the other workers engaged in the common task. Moreover, the Book of Acts, which gives us our only formal history of the Christian movement during that period, has devoted attention almost exclusively to Paul once the Christian movement has reached gentile lands. Owing to these circumstances of fortune, or of misfortune, our extant information regarding the history of Christianity among Gentiles in the early period reduces itself very largely to data which can be derived from the epistles of Paul and the account of his career reported in the Acts. Thus it comes about that a history of gentile Christianity in its earliest stages is of necessity mainly a history of Christianity in the Pauline communities.

I

The area covered by Paul and his helpers included the chief centers of population in the northeastern portion of the Mediterranean. Since the time of its foundation in the year 300 B.C. Antioch, the capital of Syria, had been a

meeting-place for East and West. The Galatian cities in central Asia Minor, where Paul had labored, were on the principal highways which traversed that part of the country. In his journey to Troas, and to Philippi, Thessalonica, and on down through Athens to Corinth, Paul was again following one of the main routes of travel; and when he took up his residence in Corinth he found himself in one of the most important commercial centers of the day. Again, at Ephesus, he was centrally located, in a city through which the great currents of life were flowing back and forth across the Aegean Sea. When, finally, he made his plans to go to Rome, he was fully aware that already the Christian movement had established itself with an important community at the very capital of the Empire.

The fact that Christianity, at the outset, was thus a movement within the cities, and found its first adherents at the principal centers of population, had no little significance for its early history. It was at these points that the new syncretistic society of imperial times exhibited its most distinctive characteristics. At these centers people of all nationalities mingled together in a common life, pursuing

their individual quests, and evolving new types of social experience. These persons represented what one might call the fluid element in society. Under the conditions of their new life they often found it necessary to move about somewhat rapidly from place to place, and this social mobility emphasized in their experience the need for a religion that would serve the welfare of the individual rather than one that gave traditional guaranties of a local, racial, or national sort.

The broadening of experiences through the syncretistic action of cosmopolitan influences tended to engender alertness and curiosity, as well as a feeling of recklessness and an increasing dissatisfaction with older norms. This tendency stimulated the religious quest generally, and made possible a rather successful missionary propaganda on the part of various oriental cults, such as the mysteries, whose popularity during this period rapidly increased all about the Roman world. These conditions also aided Christianity's spread, and opened up to it possibilities of success which two or three centuries earlier would have been quite out of the question. But the situation also had its disadvantages in that it brought upon the scene so

many rival cults of a type which to outsiders must have seemed not unlike Christianity. Even the most ardent Christian preacher would find it difficult to persuade Gentiles that his religion could offer them any new satisfactions that were not already attainable in the older and more widely established cults, with their greater social respectability. While the new status of society had created a type of religious quest that was favorable to the prosperity of the Christian movement, at the same time the demand had been so extensively met in other cults thriving by virtue of the new situation that they already constituted formidable rivals to the nascent Christian movement.

These contemporary social conditions had a varied significance for the early history of Christianity among Gentiles. The first converts were drawn from among the adult membership of the population whose religious interests and habits had been formed under the tutelage of the heathen cults. The contribution of these converts toward the further determination of the new Christian society would naturally be colored to a considerable extent by the heritage of habit, desire, and judgments which they brought with them from their past life. More-

over, if the Christian movement were to become attractive to Gentiles, its advocates must learn how to phrase their message in the language of the day, and how to set forth religious values in terms of the satisfactions which the Gentiles themselves were seeking. Just how far these two influences affected the development of Christianity in that plastic stage of its primitive history will perhaps never be finally determined. But that the new religion felt the influence of heritages carried over by adult converts from their past, and that it further shaped its course in accordance with practical demands felt by its advocates are facts which no serious historian, viewing the Christian movement in the light of vital social contacts, would think for a moment of attempting to deny.

Naturally Judaism was the contemporary religion from which the early Christian movement at the outset derived most. For centuries the Jewish religion had been a competitor among other oriental cults for the allegiance of Gentiles. But full admission to Judaism meant the acceptance of rites that would engraft one into the Jewish race. Judaism still clung to her ancient character as a religion for a race rather than a religion for an individual. To be sure,

Jewish teachers had developed emphasis upon the personal life, and personal relationships between the worshiper and the deity had come to attract a large measure of attention. But it was still maintained that the guaranties of the Jewish religion belonged only to those who came under the covenant which God had made with Abraham and Moses in days of old. The full blessings of the Jewish faith, therefore, were available only to that proselyte who would accept circumcision and the attendant rites which meant in reality his union with the Jewish nation. But the national or racial form of religious quest was being rapidly outgrown in the Roman world, and the failure of the Jews to abandon their traditional rites of initiation made impossible any hope that Judaism might become a successful interpreter of the religious experience of the age.

Those Gentiles who had been attracted by the ethical and spiritual content of Jewish religion, but who had hesitated to place themselves within the Jewish society, found it possible in a Christian community to retain all the values which they had previously prized, while at the same time avoiding the social disadvantages of membership in the Jewish race. This

phase of adjustment made by Christianity early in its missionary propaganda among Gentiles gave it a tremendous advantage over its Jewish rival. Paul may not have been fully aware of the social significance involved in his contention that it was not necessary for gentile Christians to accept circumcision, but a modern student of religious conditions within the Roman Empire easily sees how tremendously far-reaching and important for the success of the Christian cause Paul's contention actually was.

Without such freedom the Christian societies never could have taken their place side by side with other religions whose offers of satisfaction rested simply upon an individual basis. Had the worshipers of Isis demanded that her devotees should first become by some particular ceremony of initiation Egyptians, or had the Cybele cult required her followers to identify themselves with the Phrygian race, or had Mithraism demanded that all its adherents should become members of the Persian race, these religions would have courted at the start disaster and defeat. Judaism had in it elements that appealed far more strongly to large numbers of people in the Roman world than had any of these other cults, yet Judaism's

prospects were far less promising just because it adhered so persistently to the old principle of nationality and racial integrity as the basis of religious surety.

The separation of the Christian groups from the Jewish assemblies forced Christians to build up a new social status of their own, a fact which some of them at the outset probably regarded as a calamity, but which in the end proved to be a great advantage. For a considerable time, to be sure, the public at large did not realize that Christianity was a movement independent of Judaism, but knowing the fact of its original Jewish home in Palestine, and of the large heritages from the Jewish religion that were found within the Christian groups, it was popularly regarded by many as little more than a Jewish sect. But those persons whose contact with Christianity was sufficiently close to give them an understanding of its real genius, and whose sympathy went so far as to result in attachment to this new cause, were well aware of the wide breach which separated the worshiping Christian groups from the synagogue. As Christianity built up its own social stamina, it followed more and more lines which had been determined by the religious quest of the gentile

world, and less and less the model which had been set by the synagogue and the type of religion there perpetuated.

II

What satisfactions had Christians to offer in answer to the religious cravings of their contemporaries? With what assurances could they surround life and what program had they to suggest for the amelioration of its ills as felt within an environment that seemed so generally fraught with possibilities of disaster? It is perfectly clear that members of the Christian group or at least the leading advocates of the movement affirmed without hesitation that membership in their society would relieve one from all imminent dangers, would guarantee a full satisfaction for all the worthy quests of life, and would insure an ultimate triumph over all misfortune, both in this world and in the world to come.

In their efforts to solve the problem of living, Christians took their stand with the common man rather than with the intellectuals. They did not attempt to philosophize out of life its realistic ills nor did they propose in Stoic fashion to eliminate evil by an attitude of lofty indifference. Apparently on one occasion Paul tried

to meet the philosophers on their own ground, but with quite unsatisfactory results. At least after the Athenian episode he seems to have decided never to attempt the experiment again, for he says to the Corinthians that when he began preaching among them he had "determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified." He was done with the wisdom of the world and henceforth his preaching would be concerned with divine wisdom expressed in the mystery of the death and resurrection of the Christian savior. The Gentiles, accustomed as they were to the phenomenon of the mystery religions, would have no difficulty in understanding Paul on this point. His statement meant for them, to use modern imagery, that he did not advocate a religion which man had worked out for himself through the exercise of his own rational power, not a religion of attainment, but a religion which had been given to man through divine revelation, one that was guaranteed in concrete and pictorial fashion by the action of the Diety himself intervening in the affairs of humanity to institute a religion of divine redemption.

Thus Christians belonged among those people of the Mediterranean world who main-

tained that man was environed by a society in which he had not only to reckon with social activities instigated by his fellow-men, but with mighty supernatural forces. Indeed, it was his chief concern to secure himself against the hostility of these occult powers and to court their friendship. So the Christians, like their contemporary religionists, paid little heed to problems of social adjustment in the normal relationships of life and gave chief attention to establishing safe relations with the supernatural environment in order to realize in the present life the greatest possible measure of safety and to secure for the life to come indubitable assurances of well-being. They adopted the supernatural interpretation of society as the determining consideration which molded their attitudes, gave direction to their conduct, and shaped their ideals.

In contrast with many of their gentile neighbors, however, their ideal attitude was one of perfect confidence which defied all dangers, smiled at all disasters, and faced with utter indifference even death itself. A typical Christian, in this attitude of indifference to the evils about him, might well have been an object of envy even to the most devoted disciple of

Stoic apathy. Nor did this disposition on the part of the Christians signify simply a following of the line of least resistance. Their social status at the first was of such a nature as to involve them in numerous difficulties, sometimes with members of their own families, or with neighbors in their own community, and even with the authorities of the state. When the Thessalonian Christians suffered many things of their own countrymen they were duplicating not only the experience of their brethren in Judea and of Paul himself, but of practically every Christian group that arose in the early history of the movement.

The attitude of confidence which pervaded the Christian societies in all their various relations rested primarily upon the establishment of an alliance between themselves and their triumphant Savior, who had been victorious over the worst misfortunes that could befall humanity, even death on the cross. Since his victory had been consummated by elevation to a position of unique authority at God's right hand in heaven, he was now the lordly protector of every Christian community. This confidence was no mere theory but a fact of immediate experience realized through the

activities of the Holy Spirit. Confident that they belonged to Christ, that they were his property, that his spirit possessed them, even that he himself dwelt within them, that he was present in the worshiping communities where his power was displayed in a variety of spiritual endowments, life for them naturally took on boldness, and dangers before which they would previously have cowered were now met with smiling confidence.

In spite of their confidence, Christians shared with their contemporaries the common experience of disappointment and misfortune. A Christian merchant was subject to the same inevitable adversities that beset his neighbor. The Christian slave was no less a menial than his heathen kinsman. The winning of food, clothing, and a shelter meant a struggle for the Christian as truly as for his non-Christian contemporary, and indeed perhaps the very fact of Christian discipleship sometimes greatly augmented the difficulties of the situation. But adversity did not always dampen one's ardor. Confidence remained unshaken, because the earliest Christians so generally transferred the realization of their hopes from the immediate present into the near future when a new and ideal

society would miraculously supplant the present evil order. Presumably the Pauline communities shared with the apostle this confidence which he so often expressed and which he seems sometimes to have regarded as the most distinctive characteristic of the Christian attitude.

Christians, however, did not minimize the menace that lurked within heathen society, even though they freely condemned the characteristic means employed by their neighbors to thwart dangers and avert disaster. The whole system of religious safeguards which heathen society had reared about itself for its protection was regarded by Christians as utterly vain, indeed worse than vain because a positive evil. While idols and images were declared to be only the futile creations of man's hands, Christians entertained no delusions regarding the supernatural beings that were thought to infest the whole of heathen life. These demonic powers were dreadful realities that threatened humanity with terrible ruin. Christians were safe, not because there were no dangers nor because the demons were powerless, but rather because Christians were under the protection of a greater power, the heavenly Christ. Possessing this supernatural safeguard they were able

to rest in confidence. Sometimes new converts, after receiving the assurances of Christ's protection, mingled in their former pagan associations, doubtless acting on the conviction that now they were secure in the possession of their new supernatural guardian. It was not any misgiving on Paul's part regarding the ability of Christ to protect his own that led him to condemn the naïve assurance of the new converts. He did not doubt the power of the indwelling Christ to keep them from harm, but he did fear lest by their conduct they would offend their master and would no longer be accounted worthy habitations for the Holy Spirit. If Christ were to withdraw his presence then, indeed, would they be in sad plight. They would become victims of demons now doubly angry because the Christians had temporarily thwarted them in their designs. On one occasion Paul advises that a certain transgressor in the Corinthian community be excluded from the protection of the Christian group in order that he may now fall into the hands of Satan, and thereby receive in this life suitable discipline for his sins (I Cor. 5:5).

From the point of view of Christians, membership in their new society was the only way to

safety. Outside one lived amid the constant perils of a social order that was demon-inspired and demon-infested, and the ultimate end of which was to be utter destruction in the day of the Lord Jesus.

III

Life within the Christian group displays some distinctive and interesting characteristics. The personnel of the group, like the society of the age, is varied and syncretistic in its composition. It includes both men and women who represent different stations in life. Some are slaves, some are householders, others are traders, artisans, or day-laborers moving about from place to place in the quest for a livelihood. Some are sufficiently well-to-do to have houses at which they can entertain the Christian assemblies, while others are so impecunious that they depend upon the common meals furnished by the new societies as an important source of their food supply. Racial and national differences also disappear as Jews, Syrians, Greeks, and persons of any race mingle together in the Christian communities.

Admission to membership rested upon a purely personal basis. Questions of ancestry, of social status, or of cultural attainment, or

even of preparatory moral excellence, did not enter into the consideration. No herald in the Christian assemblies announced, after the model of the Eleusinian mysteries, that admission to the cult was open only to those who could meet specified tests of a ritual or moral sort. Christians invited even the most degenerate members of society to test for themselves the redeeming and purifying power of the new faith. Paul would have responded as proudly as Origen did two centuries later to the charge of Christian laxity in selecting its membership, that other religions might well exercise care in the selection of a prepared membership, but that the efficacy of Christianity was so great as to make preliminary cautions unnecessary. The new religion was so powerful that it could transform even the vilest sinner into the purest saint.

No period of preliminary preparation with abstinences, fasting, or other purging rites was prescribed. Rather the individual submitted himself in his natural state, whatever that might be, to the transforming efficacy of the divine power represented by the Christian movement. Not by his own preparatory work, but purely and simply through the sufficiency of the Christ in whom he trusted, did he secure his salvation.

Paul unequivocally affirmed that the new religion operated by divine power to effect salvation for everyone who exercised faith (Rom. 1:16). The whole matter could be epitomized in the terse formula: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

This direct and individual relationship between the believer and Christ as lord of the community involved a type of experience correspondingly spontaneous and immediate. Undoubtedly the conversion of a Gentile was often a sudden decision made under the stress of high emotion. While listening to the spirit-inspired utterances of the Christian preacher the sinner felt that the secrets of his heart had been made manifest, and that he must fall down upon his face and worship the god whom he felt to be present among the Christians (I Cor. 14:25). Likewise, the emotional satisfactions which followed admission to the Christian group were of a highly colored order. The new convert felt himself to be a "new creation in Christ Jesus." The heightening of his emotional life was taken to be a direct result of the Spirit's activity as it dwelt in the indi-

vidual himself. Henceforth he was a "spiritual" person, in whom Christ had taken up his abode as a pneumatic presence daily realized in the emotional life of the new convert. He was veritably the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Henceforth it was not the Christian that lived, but the Spirit that lived in him. He was dead to the older order of existence, and had become alive to a new order. His personal living as an individual, and his experiences within the group were both expressions of the divine life which he now cherished within himself. His entire conduct belonged in the divine sphere and, ideally at least, was perfect. Of course to Paul, who had been trained in the strenuous ethical system of Judaism, the conduct displayed by gentile converts both individually and in their community life often fell far short of what seemed to him to be the ideal. Yet it is perfectly apparent that the Gentiles frequently judged themselves far less severely, and in all good conscience were prepared to justify their procedure as being in perfect accord with the will of Christ.

In any event, the end of Christian morality was not the attainment of salvation. Just because the moral life was a consequence of,

and not a preliminary to, the union with Christ, which alone meant deliverance for the individual, did it seem, to Paul at least, very necessary for every Christian to maintain in his personal living the strictest standards of rectitude. Only thus could the indwelling Spirit of holiness be retained, for Christ would not dwell in an impure tabernacle nor share his abode with demonic neighbors. And to drive away the Spirit by offensive conduct would mean the loss of the Christian's birthright. But probably the gentile converts were not as a rule troubled by the lugubrious anxieties which so often cast their shadow over the pages of Paul's letters. They were satisfied to know that they possessed the emotional uplift which was evidence of the Spirit's presence. And if they still seemed to retain this experience in spite of what appeared to Paul to be their too easy morality, it would only mean for them that Paul was overanxious. Doubtless they were moral in their own way, according to their light and in line with their own heritages, and even in a new way in accordance with the Christian ideals. But that Paul's aggravated stress upon ethical injunctions, present in almost every one of his letters, truly represents their psychology is probably

not correct. They were living in the more joyous and happy atmosphere of the realization of a unique experience of high emotional value, which very experience gave conduct adequate justification in their own conscience. Undoubtedly they esteemed themselves to be truly a community of saints, over whom their Lord ruled with approval, and whose Spirit dwelt continually in their midst.

Life within the Christian society was from this point of view a high privilege. Socially and economically it was quite impossible for the Christians as individuals to break with their environment. They must earn their living by accustomed means, which meant that a Christian slave must still perform his appointed task among heathen associations in the household of his master. The small Christian shopkeeper must still cater to his pagan customers. The Christian wife must perform her duties in the home, even though her husband was a typical pagan who held the new religion in utter contempt. Thus most Christians as individuals must continue to live in the pagan life of association with demons, but the new strength and power which they carried away from their experiences at the meetings of the Christian

groups enabled them to go forth with full assurances of safety. They bore about with them in the experiences of the Spirit in their inner lives a new sense of supremacy over all the demonic phases of their environment.

Under these circumstances, one of the principal functions of the meetings of the Christian group was to furnish renewed assurance of possession by the Spirit. Many a Christian must have found himself discouraged, oppressed, and sometimes in doubt as to the adequacy of the new power which earlier he had felt to be full and complete. While he had shared with his brethren the enthusiasm which pervaded the Christian meeting, it had been easy to maintain his elevated state of mind. Often the sobering consequences of daily contacts with the outside world would have seriously dampened Christian zeal had it not been for the renewing power of repeated attendance upon the meetings. In these assemblies the new convert heard the Scripture read, he listened to the prayers of the brethren, he participated in the singing of the hymns, he was moved by the ecstatic utterances of the Christian prophet, he saw the sick healed and other miracles performed, and he witnessed the mysterious

phenomenon of speaking in a tongue—if one may take the life of the Corinthian community as typical of others (I Cor. chaps. 12–14).

The practical outcome of life within the Christian societies was undoubtedly both inspirational and edifying. The experience involved not only a stimulation of ideals but also the realization of a better life. Here the Christian came face to face with new moral ideals, and through the emotional experiences insured by his membership in the society, he received new strength to carry his ideals into effect. He learned how to walk by the Spirit, and in so doing he found a new means of release from the lusts of the flesh. But from the point of view of his own interpretation of his experience undoubtedly the strengthening of the inner man seemed to him the matter of supreme importance. By initiation into the new religion he had attained the experience of a rebirth which meant the incoming of the power of heaven into his own life. This power was continually renewed by attendance upon the meetings, until the attitude of assurance became gradually fixed as a matter of habit. In his new associations he found new satisfactions for his social life. Here he made friends and lived on the

same social level with persons who perhaps in the ordinary conditions of society would have failed even to recognize his existence. The new society also afforded an opportunity for the expression of his own personality as he took his part in the services of the group, and assumed his share of the responsibility for its maintenance.

IV

The social structure of the primitive Christian communities was exceedingly simple. Indeed, one might reasonably ask whether they made any use whatever of the characteristic mechanisms upon which social groups are accustomed to rely in their efforts to stimulate the attitudes desired, to secure satisfaction for their wishes and to control activity with a view to insuring the common good. Whatever features of formal organization one may ultimately find present in these societies, it is perfectly clear that they did not begin by framing a formal constitution and by-laws in which the functions of the society were specifically defined, the proper officers designated, and their respective duties prescribed. In other words, the early Christian groups were not at the outset constitutionally organized.

The reasons for the absence of constitutional formalities are not far to seek. Spontaneity and divine control, rather than design and human scheming, are the foci about which the life of the early Christian communities first crystallized. The Christians were confident that their movement was not of men but of God, hence they looked to the Spirit to furnish direction and control. The society was Christ's and not one of their own making. When the members were forced by circumstances to assume responsibilities, as was indeed the case from the start, they viewed their duties as God-given rather than as obligations imposed by the society itself. They were members not of a Baptist church or a Congregational church or a Methodist church or a Presbyterian church or an Anglican church, and so in duty bound to follow the constitution and by-laws of a particular communion, but rather they counted themselves members of the church of God or of Christ and for the ordering of this divine institution's life the Deity himself was held primarily responsible. Moreover according to their way of thinking the functions of control within the life of the community were being adequately discharged by the operation of the

Spirit, variously designated Holy Spirit, Spirit of Christ, or Christ himself.

Notwithstanding its alleged divine character, this new society was composed of human individuals living in concrete relations with an earthly environment. It was under the same practical necessity as were other social movements to devise concrete means for sustaining its existence. No movement can long exist and successfully impress its environment without soon devising, either unconsciously or by design, some sort of mechanical structure. In this particular, Christianity was no exception. Even in the primitive period the Christian societies were not so deficient in this respect as has sometimes been assumed by historians.

Just how far were mechanical means employed by the Christian society for engendering and controlling the experiences, the attitudes, the interests, and the goals that were peculiar to the Christian way of living? Perhaps the question could be put more consistently with the ancient point of view by asking to what extent God, operating through Christ or the Spirit, made use of specific rites, designated particular officials, or prescribed set forms of conduct to realize the purposes for

which the Christian movement had been brought into existence?

If one keeps in mind the personnel of the Christian societies and the necessity which uncultured people have for thinking in terms of the concrete and pictorial it will not seem strange to find that with all of their idealism and faith in the power of deity, the early Christians did find it desirable to attach a great deal of significance to specific religious rites, and to the proper performance of particular ceremonies for the realization of religious values. The dislike of many moderns for the notion of mechanical operations in religion and their shyness at the conception of sacramentalism are psychological attitudes engendered by a scientific age when religious reality has been transferred largely if not wholly into the realm of the metaphysical. It should be remembered, however, that in prescientific times and among peoples of a primitive culture metaphysics plays a comparatively insignificant rôle in the field of religion. For persons who have not been unduly tempted to intellectualize their experiences and whose religion is experientially rather than doctrinally defined, it is in the concretely pictorial and factually

realistic sphere that the highest religious values emerge.

It is perfectly clear, for example, that the primitive gentile Christians attached very great significance to the rite of baptism as the ordinance by which one gained admission to the Christian society and became entitled to its privileges. But admission meant for the people of that day not simply formal membership in a group but union with the lord of the community and consequently a very distinct experiential value. When baptized into Christ one "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Whether a convert was originally a Jew, a Greek, or a man of any other nationality was a fact which baptism nullified. When baptized he became a full-fledged member of a new society which accorded to all persons in the group a new and equal social rating regardless of any previous distinctions of class or race. Even distinctions of sex lost their significance, for by the rite of baptism both men and women became a united body in Christ. When a Gentile had acquired that attitude of confidence toward Jesus which is expressed by the word "faith," which was in substance a confession of Jesus' lordship on the basis of belief in his resurrection from the dead (Rom.

10:9), he was a suitable candidate for baptism. But his position was not secure until by the performance of the rite itself he became institutionally united to Christ and to the company over which the Spirit presided.

When Paul upbraided the Corinthians for the party division which had arisen among them he reminded them of the fact that they had all been baptized into Christ's name, and into Christ's name only, consequently they were a social unit and could not consistently break up into competitive groups. Paul expressed gratitude over the fact that he had not baptized any of them himself, or had at least baptized only a very few, because otherwise those who were calling themselves members of the party of Paul might have justified their contention by affirming that he had baptized them in his own name, by which act they would have become according to the notions of the time sacramentally united to him instead of to Christ. Moderns have frequently misunderstood Paul in this connection. It is just because of the great significance attaching to the baptismal rite and not because of its minor importance that Paul congratulates himself on having baptized so few of the Corinthians. By this

very argument, however, he makes it perfectly clear that the Corinthian Christians had all been baptized and baptized into the name of Christ—a rite which united them to him and cemented in divine fashion the unity of the social group (I Cor. 1:10–17).

The character of life and the distinctive type of religious experience realized within Christianity are also linked with the notion of baptism. Prior to their union with the Christian group Gentiles were members of the demonic society of heathendom. The life which they had lived was, according to the thought of the Christian leaders, one of complete worthlessness and depravity. Paul specifically affirmed that some members of the Christian group in Corinth had previously been guilty of such heinous acts as fornication, theft, drunkenness, and extortion, but now as a result of their admission to Christianity by the performance of the proper rites of initiation, he could say that they had been washed, sanctified, and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11).

In theory at least all who had been baptized into Christ Jesus had died to the old order of existence as truly as Jesus had died on the cross,

and had risen to a new life within the Christian society as truly as Jesus himself had risen from the dead (Rom. 6:3–11). And this newness of life meant not only a new divine state of existence within the Christian group in the present world, but apparently its virtue was thought to reach beyond the grave where Christians who had realized this experience on earth would now be assured of safety in the hour of resurrection. They would at that time constitute the favored company to rise and receive Christ at their head. Hence they performed the rite of baptism for their deceased friends in order that the new society in the coming world might not be marred by the sadness that inevitably must attend the absence of a Christian's loved ones from the company of the redeemed (I Cor. 15:29).

Still one other significant phase of Christian life had a close genetic connection with the rite of baptism. In the meetings of the assembly the Spirit's presence was demonstrated in the form of various functions discharged by the members of the group. Some persons were thus endowed to speak a word of wisdom and knowledge; others to perform healing and work miracles; others to prophesy; others to exercise

a discernment of spirits; others to speak in varieties of tongues; and still others to interpret the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. And all of these things were performed through the activities of the one Spirit, thus bestowing heavenly powers upon the members of the Christian society (I Cor. 12:28).

When was this spiritual endowment received and how was one to know that the spirit of Jesus rather than some demonic supernatural agency was operating to produce the unique phenomena? The genuineness of the Spirit was proved by the very simple but efficacious test of a confession of Jesus' lordship. One whose pneumatic life rested upon loyalty to Jesus could regard himself as properly possessing the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3). And the unity of this experience for all Christians rested upon the conviction that they were all united to one and the same heavenly Christ, who was the one body of which they were all members. Furthermore, the specific moment at which they became members of Christ and authentically secured a place in the Christian body was at the time of baptism, at which time also they had received the endowment of the Holy Spirit. It was through this sacred rite that they had all been

united into one body, when all previous distinctions had been wiped out, and when all had been as Paul says, "made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). Thus they had received the Spirit almost as realistically as they would have imbibed the waters of baptism had they drunk them down at the time the rite was performed.

The Christian society also had certain specific means for strengthening its divine life. Without opportunities for renewal the members of the community could hardly have succeeded in permanently maintaining that feeling of elation and safety which gave them their most prized religious satisfactions. But meetings for worship held at regular intervals provided ample means for reviving waning enthusiasms. There was at the outset no elaborate organization for regulating the activities of the assemblies. The structure of the society was as yet comparatively simple owing to the fact that the conduct of the group reflected so prominently the spontaneous and emotional reactions of its members. The artificial controls which they employed were as yet very few and were thought to be directly authenticated by the Holy Spirit.

Yet certain definite forms of community activity were differentiated from others, as it fell to different persons to discharge different functions. Someone must provide a place for the meetings and be responsible for the general business arrangements necessary to the maintenance of the group's existence. Also the conduct of the worship required a measure of direction. Somebody must decide when a prophet should cease speaking and allow his neighbor to have the floor (I Cor. 14:29 f.). Someone must assume the responsibility for proper procedure in the admission of new members to the group. When questions of discipline arose, such as the exclusion from the community of an individual who had violated the proprieties, there must be some persons whose duty it would be to put the ruling into effect.

Nevertheless detailed knowledge regarding the specific devices employed to insure proper direction and control is comparatively scanty. Paul with his characteristic aggressiveness insisted that his word was law for those communities which he had founded. As one especially favored by visions and revelations he spoke with an authority that tolerated no disobedience. Yet those in the community who

found themselves differing with Paul might also seriously claim to speak by the Spirit. For one who honestly held a contrary opinion, disagreement would only mean that one's opponent was dominated by an unworthy spirit. Notwithstanding the generally accepted view that the community was Spirit-guided, it still needed even at a very early date a measure of concrete human guidance.

Even the Pauline churches produced an elementary type of formal religious leadership in addition to that supplied by the directing activity of the apostle himself. Paul, speaking from the standpoint of supernatural direction rather than from that of immediate service to the group, says: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues" (I Cor. 12:28). Perhaps this list of functions is arranged in inverse order of actual importance so far as the community's notion of practical service is concerned. At least it would appear that the Corinthians were placing most stress upon ability to speak with tongues as a test of efficiency in the life of the group. But on behalf of practical welfare a very nec-

essary service must have been rendered by those who functioned as the more sober administrators of affairs and who gave counsel and directions for regulating the community's life. And other helpers discharging the more commonplace duties connected with the material aspects of the society's existence were hardly given their true importance within a movement that interpreted its life so emphatically in terms of the supernatural.

Those individuals who served the community in these concrete ways, providing places for the meetings, attending to such financial matters as needed care, and directing the life of the group along lines of practical necessity, apparently as yet bore no official titles. Very probably they were the older members in the group, or at least persons who had been among the first converts. They are the predecessors of those officers who later are formally designated "elders," or "presbyters." Those who seemed especially gifted to care for such financial matters as needed attention, or who took upon themselves responsibility for handling the bread and the wine to be used at the Lord's Supper, do not appear at the outset to have been treated as distinct officials differentiated from the

others. But this specific type of service is the forerunner of the work which later comes to be the peculiar function of the deacons. These types of activity, while apparently not yet formalized under official designations, were certainly present and constituted an important fact in these primitive Christian communities.

There is still another phase of community machinery that seems to have been in effective operation at a very early date. This was the observance of the Lord's Supper, which in the church at Corinth, at any rate, was celebrated in the evening following the common meal of the Christian assembly (I Cor. 10:14–22; 11:20–32). This rite was observed according to a specified ceremony which Paul had taught the Corinthians on the authority of the tradition which he had himself received. Perhaps with the exception of baptism this is almost the only formal item of ritual that had as yet made a place for itself in the gentile Christian society. At least it is the most definite ritual ceremony described by Paul.

The value of the rite for the religious life of the group is apparent from Paul's reprimand of the Corinthians for abuses of which they have been guilty in connection with its observance.

At the beginning of his first epistle he had praised them for their fidelity in "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ," who presently would place his approval upon them when he returned to set up the new régime (I Cor. 1:7 f.). Similarly, in their observance of the Lord's Supper, the Corinthians should have kept vividly before their eyes the expectation of Jesus' coming: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:26).

This rite's memorial significance, inspired by those Jewish apocalyptic expectations that passed over into early Christianity, doubtless had a measure of value for gentile Christians, but hardly represents their estimate of the rite's full significance. Even for Paul with his Jewish ancestry the Supper seems to have taken on a further meaning more nearly in line with the personal and devotional religious quests that were so characteristic of the gentile world. This fact comes out somewhat clearly in the details of Paul's reprimand.

Paul has two counts against the Corinthians for misconduct in connection with the eating of the Lord's Supper. In the first place, he regrets that certain Christians have still been

attending the feast at the idol's temple, where they ate a meal in connection with the heathen ceremonies. But participation in the heathen feast meant the eating of demon-infected food, for from the Christian point of view all heathen gods were simply demons. To partake therefore of the religious meal in the idol's temple involved communion with demons, and when these same Christians came to the Lord's Supper assuming that they could also have communion with the Lord Jesus they incurred the gravest dangers. Paul reminded them that it was quite impossible to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, and to partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons (I Cor. 10:21).

Just as drinking of the cup of demons and partaking of the table of demons meant the absorption into one's self of demon power and demon presence, so apparently did participation in the Lord's Supper, the drinking of the cup of the Lord and the eating of the body of the Lord, mean the strengthening of the Christians in their consciousness of possession of Jesus Christ as a realistic presence in the believer. This experience of the indwelling Christ was one of the great religious values

which membership within the Christian community secured for new converts. And in every worthy observance of the Lord's Supper, the participant when he ate the bread should discern a fresh incoming of the divine increment by which he had been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Similarly he should discern experientially in the sacramental cup a like realization of the presence of Christ, as a veritable addition to his own personality. But when he ate at the idol's temple and thus made himself a dwelling-place of demons he was defiling the temple of his body which should have been kept sacred as the dwelling-place of Christ. By his misconduct the sinner was provoking the Lord to jealousy, for he was seeking to house Christ in the same abode with heathen demons.

In a second respect the Christians at Corinth were in danger of missing the real security values that normally should attend the observance of the Lord's Supper, because they were nullifying its efficacy by observing the rite when in an incompetent state as a result of a previous meal shared by the group. Perhaps it is because of their too free contact with the demon-infested heathen world that this love-feast for which

they assembled in the evening had turned out on occasion to be more in the nature of a gluttonous festival or drunken carousal than a dignified and worthy Christian performance. Temporarily the Christian society had fallen under the spell of demonic influence. When the Lord's Supper was observed under these conditions, it was quite impossible for the participants properly to emotionalize the experience in terms of true discernment of the body and the blood of Christ. And since they were trying thus unworthily to introduce the sacred presence into their demon-infested selves, the result had in some cases proved disastrous. The Lord, being offended, had allowed the demons to have their way and thus some Corinthian Christians who ideally should have been utterly immune from the dangers of the demon environment were afflicted with sickness and even in some instances had been carried off by the demon of death.

This severe reproval of the Corinthians by Paul incidentally makes very clear the functional value of the Lord's Supper for the new society. It was a sacred rite whose proper observance emotionally strengthened in the members of the group an assuring experience

of the renewed presence of Christ as a realistic indwelling power within the believer.

Primitive gentile Christianity in general, as represented by the Pauline churches, exhibits only the most elementary forms of a social structure. It has not yet worked out any elaborate system of mechanical controls in the way of an authorized ritual, definitely designated officials with clearly specified functions, a well-defined scheme of ecclesiastical organization, an elaborate formulation of dogma, or any organic device for welding the groups into a united society that might represent the common interests of the new movement in conflict with a hostile environment. Reliance is placed chiefly upon the spontaneity and enthusiasm of the individual as realized in the emotional life of the group, an experience which is believed to be supernaturally guaranteed and therefore to constitute the only direction necessary for the success of the new cause.

But time soon proved that the struggle was to be of longer duration and the weapons needed in the contest were to be more worldly than Paul and his fellow-enthusiasts had realized. After Paul's day gentile Christianity enters upon a new stage of growth, when for over a century

the principal developments in its history exhibit a gradual process of consolidation by which the movement evolves a more adequate equipment for the direction and control of its own society and makes a correspondingly more effective impact upon its environment.

CHAPTER V

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

Christianity could hardly have become a stable factor in the ancient world had it adhered strictly to the interests, attitudes, and activities characteristic of the Pauline communities in the apostle's own day. Ideally, one may be allured by the picture of a religious society spontaneously operating under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. But so far as social solidarity is concerned, the practical application of this ideal almost inevitably leads to unhappy results. While the company is small and composed of people whose inclinations run in the same channel, and who have in their midst only one or two dominating personalities, then the principle of guidance by the Spirit may be applied with safety. But when the membership becomes larger, when a diversity of interests manifest themselves, and when several persons in the group exhibit an inclination toward initiative and leadership, trouble inevitably ensues.

Theoretically, each individual in a Spirit-directed society acts by authority of the same Spirit, and, under the conviction that he is supernaturally guided and approved in advocating his own particular interests or his own special point of view, he proceeds in the name of heaven to lead in a divisive controversy which renders utterly impossible the attainment of any true social solidarity. Under these circumstances, alleged guidance by the Spirit easily becomes a violent centrifugal force that would in time demolish the unity of any group which failed to develop counter-means of control for maintaining its integrity.

Christians began to realize this danger as early as the last quarter of the first century. They never for a moment abandoned the idea of supernatural guidance by the Spirit, but they sought to devise ways and means for controlling the contentious inclinations and aberrations of the human agencies through which the Holy Spirit was assumed to work. Perhaps it would not be too bold to describe the characteristic developments within Christianity for nearly a century after the time of Paul as dominated primarily by an interest in working out in one form or another means of control that would

render its position in society more attractive, stable, and permanent, that would prevent disintegration of the new movement through the explosion of forces from within, and that would give it more complete mastery over its own developing social life, both within the separate groups and throughout Christendom as a whole.

This less spectacular process of social consolidation does not, to be sure, make the same appeal to the imagination of the historian as does the more primitive picture of individual enthusiasts living a life of spontaneity and ecstasy in Spirit-controlled communities. But the value of the more sober ordering of the movement's life as an aid to the perpetuation of its existence under new conditions ought not to escape the appreciation of a thoughtful student.

I

The inconspicuous part played by Paul in the history of Christianity in the post-apostolic age has often been the subject of comment. But the explanations ordinarily proposed to account for this phenomenon have been phrased quite uniformly in terms of doctrinal interests and controversies, and have rarely if ever been set forth in the clearer light of social history.

As a matter of fact, there was so little in Paul's work that lent itself to the service of Christianity in the hour of its need for social consolidation, and for the gradual upbuilding of a social structure, that one might question why he figured even as prominently as he did in the history of the movement during the next century. Had it not been for the fact that his name was carried along on the wave of apostolic authority, which the church early employed as one of its instruments of control, it is very doubtful whether Paul would have received even as much attention as he did. But at best it was Paul's name rather than the Pauline type of Christianity that was held in esteem. Perhaps one might say that not until the time of the Reformation did he really come into his own, and even then it was an European, and not an oriental, Paul who stalked across the stage.

If the gentile Christianity of the second generation was not a Pauline product, whence did it come? If the records of the early Christian movement had been more fully preserved, probably it would be possible to answer this question without hesitation. Even as the situation is, we know that there were gentile

communities in existence before Paul's day, and certainly that there were important non-Pauline communities in his own time. At Rome in particular, there was an influential group to whom he addressed a communication at the time when he hoped soon to make a journey to the West, and desired the Roman Christians to look favorably upon his proposal to visit Spain. Apparently he hoped to persuade them that he was worthy of their confidence and of any contribution they might make toward his enterprise (Rom. 15:24, 28 f.). Yet his letter portrayed real misgivings on his part as to how his appeal might be received.

Probably some of the members of the Christian community in Rome were converted Jews, but the great majority were Gentiles, and it was on the strength of this fact that Paul justified his aggressiveness in writing the letter (1:13 f; 11:13; 15:15 f.). In spite of the fact that he is addressing a gentile group, his words betray a measure of nervousness and an apologetic attitude which indicate very plainly his complete awareness of the difference between his special type of Christianity and the type represented by the gentile group in Rome. Paul is

confident, of course, that his is the right type, and theirs the wrong one, hence he desires to impart unto them some spiritual gift to the end that they may be established (1:11), and reminds them that God will judge the secrets of men "according to *my* gospel" (2:16). But he is also quite well aware that the Romans are likely to look askance at his coming, and are entirely satisfied with the Christianity which is already in vogue in their own community.

The fundamental issue in the epistle to the Romans concerns the form of control that should prevail in a society specifically and properly Christian. For Paul, the ideals of faith, mystical experience, guidance by the Spirit, and an attitude of expectancy with reference to the early return of Jesus are the characteristic marks of a true Christianity. The Romans on the other hand adhere to a type of life which is controlled, not so distinctly through immediate experience, as by revelation contained in a book, the Old Testament. Although they are Gentiles, they have made this book so thoroughly their own that Paul can call them "men who know the law" and can assume that, in some instances at least, their attachment of this ancient revelation has gone to the extreme of

accepting literally its law of circumcision (2:27; 7:1).

Evidently the Romans felt that Christianity needed the steadying force to be derived from a deep rooting in the past, and in that divinely ordered past, the history of which was recorded in the sacred books which Christians had rescued from the Jews. Doubtless Paul's emphasis upon faith as delivering one from obligation to keep the law, and his stress upon the indwelling Spirit as the sole guiding principle for Christians, seemed to the Romans much inferior to a more sober type of conduct divinely ordered by an ancient revelation, and stabilized by reference to a concrete body of teaching in the possession of the community. Thus they maintained that all the assurances which had previously been given to the Jews had now become a Christian possession, in fact a possession of Christian Gentiles, whom Paul charges with being "wise in their own conceits," in that they suppose the Jews to have lost their rights and to have no further hope of a place within the Christian movement (11:25 f.).

Thus there is a second principal difference between Paul and the Romans, which is also primarily a social issue. While to them he

seems altogether too free in his treatment of the Old Testament, too anti-biblical let us say, at the same time he seems too liberal in his treatment of the Jews and in the hopes held out for their ultimate conversion. If Paul is too anti-biblical, he is at the same time too pro-Semitic to suit the tastes of the gentile Christians in Rome. For them the Christian society is no longer to be encumbered by its connection with the socially unpopular Jews.

Paul is at no little pains to defend his Jewish kinsmen for their failure thus far to live up to their birthright by adopting Christianity. He emphatically insists, however, that it is an error to assume, as the Gentiles in Rome apparently have been doing, that the Jews have been completely cut off from the possibility of membership in the Christian society of the future. In fact, in Paul's view, converted Jews will ultimately constitute the great bulk of Christendom. They are the main trunk of the tree, while gentile converts are but ingrafted branches. The hardening that has befallen Israel is only a temporary dispensation divinely decreed in order that the Gentiles may have a brief opportunity of hearing the gospel. Momentarily the Jews are enemies for the

Gentiles' sake, but in the eternal purposes of God the Jews are really the true elect, for their final right to the gospel has been eternally ordained (11:28–32).

Thus it is apparent that at Rome there existed a type of Christianity representing a social interest quite different from that of the Pauline churches. The attitudes dominating in the Roman community were not of the emotional, mystical type that transported one out of history and out of the present world into an elevated state of feeling which confidently waited for the advent of Christ to establish by special intervention a new social order, where Christian desires would find their true realization. The community in Rome, on the contrary, aimed by attention to didactic interests, by attachment to the past as disclosed in revelation, and by studious attention to the holy books to build up for itself a stable society with concrete forms of control, derived more particularly from the historical sources of divine wisdom rather than from the immediate operation of the Spirit within the present Christian assembly.

One need not suppose that the Romans disdained the notion of guidance by the Spirit, or

that they did not, in fact, highly prize this possession of Christians. But what is clear seems to be the fact that they gave much more studious attention than did the Pauline groups to the building up of a more normal form of control in the community, especially employing for this purpose the sanctions of Scripture. Of course the Pauline churches used Scripture but apparently not for the sake of determining a normative form of Christian social organization. Among those groups, the immediacy of the Spirit's operation and the ecstatic activities of the community's life took precedence over any written authority of the past.

The contrasting attitude of the Roman church is attested again at the end of the first century in a letter, called by us I Clement, written to the Corinthian Christians reproving them for their hasty action in deposing presbyters with whom they had grown dissatisfied. The lengthy quotations from Scripture, embodied in this letter to give it authority, constitute almost one-quarter of its contents. Again, a half-century later, when Marcion sought to purge Christendom of its Semitic strain by discarding the Old Testament, he found the Roman church bitterly hostile to

any such iconoclastic suggestion. From the first it had found the Old Testament too serviceable as a stabilizing factor in the structure of the new Christian society to sacrifice it on the altar of hostility to Judaism. Instead of rejecting the Old Testament, the Roman church threw out Marcion.

Probably Rome was not the only place where the Christian movement even in Paul's day had been building up for itself a type of community structure less dominated by emotional interests and directed more distinctly toward the maintenance of didactic values and the regulation of conduct by more concretely determinable forms of control. Such control would be authenticated principally by appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures, but probably at a comparatively early date a traditional account of Jesus' teachings was cited, side by side with the Old Testament, as an authority for the guidance of the community's life.

One is struck by the fact that the Pauline churches display no particular interest in appealing to the historical Jesus for guidance in the regulation of their society. They know that teachings of Jesus are remembered, for on occasion such tradition is cited by Paul. But

in the same breath he gives his own opinion as equally authoritative to ordain what he wills in all the churches. On the ground that he himself had been endowed by the Spirit, had in fact the "mind of Christ," and was constantly the recipient of visions and revelations from the Lord, he felt fully equipped to speak a word of instruction quite as authoritative as that which might come through tradition from the earthly Jesus. For Paul, direct communication with the heavenly Christ rendered unnecessary an appeal to the earthly Jesus. But in many non-Pauline communities, even in the apostle's own day, there must have been current collected reminiscences of Jesus' sayings that were used along with the Old Testament for giving stability and direction to the activities of the group.

Working in the service of these communities, many persons had undertaken to draw up narratives concerning the things which Jesus taught, as well as an account of his life. Such documents had been in circulation some time before the author of Luke undertook the writing of his more complete account. The so-called "Sayings" of Jesus, a document used in common by the authors of Matthew and Luke, is undoubtedly a product of this situation. The occasions

which called such writings into existence, and the purposes which they served, are to be seen in the needs of the community for concrete forms of guidance in the directing, upbuilding, and consolidating of the common life. One who supposes that they were produced primarily for dogmatic purpsoses, to perpetuate some specific scheme of theology, quite misunderstands the genius of the early Christian groups. Their elemental interests were social and practical rather than individual and speculative.

Readers have often been struck by the apparent difference in type between the Christian religion as represented, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount reported in the Gospel of Matthew, and the type of Christianity exhibited in the Pauline letters. This contrast is not imaginary but corresponds to historic fact; the two types of Christianity were actually present in the ancient world. Even in Paul's day there were Christian communities where, in contrast with the mystical and ecstatic interests that dominated in his churches, a didactic and scripturally directed form of Christian society had definitely taken shape. It was built up about the Old Testament as a source of ancient revelation, supplemented by the story of the

teachings and life of Jesus as exhibiting the latest aspect of divine intervention in human affairs. In addition to these historic norms, in all probability the present operations of the Holy Spirit were generally recognized, but received no such pre-eminence as in Pauline circles.

There are certain clear though scanty intimations that this more sober type of Christianity had invaded even the Pauline territory during the apostle's own lifetime. From Alexandria a certain Jew named Apollos made his way to Ephesus before Paul took up his residence in that city. Apollos was already "mighty in the scriptures," and "taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." Apparently he was already a Christian, although he had not yet become a Paulinist. For him baptism had signified, as for John the Baptist, only a symbol of repentance, and not the rite through which one obtained endowment by the Spirit. The Book of Acts represents Apollos as newly instructed by Paul's friends, Aquila and Priscilla, after which Apollos journeyed to Corinth where he visited the Christian communities that had been established under Paul's personal direction. Immediately the Corinthians became so agitated

over Apollos, apparently on account of his skill in the use of the Scripture, that they broke up into parties, particularly contrasting Apollos with Paul to the disadvantage of the latter.

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he found there certain Christians of the original Apollos type, who replied negatively to his inquiry: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" and for whom baptism had signified, as it did for John, a sign of repentance. But by rebaptism and the laying on of Paul's hands, these Christians became thoroughly Paulinized, for "the Holy Spirit came on them and they spake with tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). Thus they became—there were twelve of them, the author of Acts says—the nucleus of a Pauline church in Ephesus closely similar in type to the group of believers described in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of I Corinthians.

One may reasonably infer that not only at Rome, but probably at Alexandria, and certainly in Syria, there were already in Paul's day Christian communities that were building up their community organization and regulating their activities in accordance with the didactic ideal of a soberly ordered society, in contrast

with the mystical and Spirit-directed type exhibited by the Pauline churches. From Syria, Rome, and Alexandria, there emanated a series of early Christian writings pervaded by an interest in equipping the Christian societies with concrete means of instruction by which they might build up a more consolidated structure under the direction of historical sources of revelation, such as the Old Testament, the life and teachings of Jesus, and other materials of an instructive nature that provided concrete and specifically determinable forms of guidance. One thinks in this connection of the gospels, particularly Matthew and Luke, of the so-called Epistle of Barnabas, of I Clement, of the Teachings of the Apostles, and other documents of a similar character.

II

It is not easy to suppress a feeling of disappointment on descending from the airy heights of spontaneity and enthusiasm that were thrown up by the convulsions of the Spirit in the Pauline communities, to the more stifling atmosphere of those lowlands of religious experience that characterized the life of the Christian society in the post-apostolic age. But in the history of Christianity's development, this latter period

also has its own peculiar significance. It was a time when foundations were being laid, attitudes determined, and mechanisms devised for the enlargement and strengthening of the new religious movement as a force to be reckoned with in the history of the Empire. One distinctive feature of Christianity's development during this age was a more effective impact on the environment, and a correspondingly greater readiness to integrate itself in the contemporary social order.

By the abandonment of any further efforts to win a following among the Jews, the Christian movement shook off the stigma involved in the fact of its original Jewish ancestry. Yet it retained for itself full possession of the Old Testament Scriptures, justifying this confiscation of property that had once been exclusively Jewish by declaring that God had forsaken his chosen people in the same decisive way that the gentile Christians themselves had now severed their own connection with this unpopular element in society.

Several circumstances contributed toward this result. The efforts to convert the Jews had very largely failed, while the Jews themselves were among the most aggressively hostile ele-

ments in any community where the Christian movement sought to gain a footing. Also the decline in prestige of the Christian movement in Palestine not only tended to give gentile Christians a feeling of superiority, but placed upon them the necessity of working out a fresh ordering of Christianity along lines suitable to their own distinctive needs. Still another contributing factor of no slight importance was the trouble which the Jews during this period caused to the Roman state, and the growing prejudice against them on the part of the authorities. It was now very desirable, from the point of view of Christian interests, to have it definitely understood that the Christian movement ought not in any way to be associated with one's thought of the Jews.

In their efforts to make this independent position clear to their gentile contemporaries, Christians told the story of Jesus' own life in such fashion as to bring out as emphatically as possible the breach which had manifested itself between him and the Jewish religious leaders of his own day. The gospel writers would have it clearly understood that Jesus' death at the hands of his Jewish contemporaries, instead of constituting a reflection

upon the validity of the movement which he inaugurated, should be reckoned rather as one of its principal credentials. This breech between Jesus and the Jews was held up to the Gentiles as a clear indication that the new religion had been divinely intended for their own exclusive good. The values attaching to the notion of a deep rooting in a revered past were not sacrificed, but rather were secured by maintaining that Christians were the only legitimate heirs to the ancient revelation contained in the Old Testament, and by showing that the divine plan had been followed in presenting Jesus and the new movement first to the Jews. But now, owing to their rejection of Jesus, God had cast them down from their original high place of privilege. Henceforth Christianity was a distinctively gentile possession wherein were perpetuated all the values that God had revealed to his chosen people in days of old.

Christianity further prepared itself to take a larger place in the gentile world by its diminishing emphasis upon the expectation of the early return of Christ to establish catastrophically a new social order. The hope of the end was not surrendered, but by its indefinite deferment Christianity was left with a larger task

upon its hands in the prosecution of the gentile mission, and it offered a correspondingly larger opportunity for the new movement to play a significant rôle in the contemporary society.

If the end were not at hand, then it was incumbent upon the Christian so to direct his activities in the present world as to secure for himself the acquisitions needed to perpetuate a safe existence within the present social order. He could not afford to surrender the economic quest, and if he desired to exert a real influence in society he must maintain immediate contacts with the forces that were native to the social order in which he was living. Thus Christians began to cultivate much more assiduously than they had in the time of Paul the opportunities for economic prosperity, the attainment of civic influence, and the control of cultural interests, all of which had formerly been regarded as merely undesirable phases of this present evil world, but which now came to be thought of as quite properly pertinent to the interests of a Christian society.

Even as early as the period when the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts were written, one finds approval placed upon the presence in Christianity of persons engaged in the occupa-

tion of a soldier, a tax-collector, or a centurion as well as persons involved in trade and commerce and other like activities of Roman society. In the first quarter of the second century, Pliny the Younger found in the province of Bithynia, over which he had been appointed governor by Trajan, that Christianity had so mastered the economic life of the province that the ordinary ways in which its prosperity had formerly been expressed were in serious danger of collapse. Pliny says explicitly that "many persons of all ranks" had embraced this new religion, and that it had spread not only through the cities but to the villages and country districts.

There is no reason for believing that the situation in Bithynia was altogether exceptional, though it is quite possible that Pliny would not be overly conservative in describing to the emperor the extent of the difficulties which confronted him as the new appointee to the govenorship. And probably a similar caution should be applied to the words of the ascetic author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, who intimates that the Roman church, in the middle of the second century, had among its members persons who were "absorbed in business and wealth and friendship with pagans, and many other affairs of this

world." But when all due caution has been exercised, it is still clear that the Christian movement during this period had been making larger and larger gains over a wider and wider area of gentile society. It had, indeed, made a rather forceful impact upon cultural circles, as we know from the efforts put forth by the author of the Fourth Gospel to present Jesus in terms of philosophical speculation, and by the presence within the Christian movement, a short time afterward, of converted Greek philosophers such as Aristides and Justin, as well as the early representatives of Gnosticism.

That aloofness in which the Christians originally took much pride, regarding themselves as mere sojourners in present society with no desire to become a part of it, was now giving way to a growing ambition that Christians might be recognized as an integral factor, and in fact the most valuable element, in the population of the Roman Empire. They resented the popular charge, for which, however, their own earlier attitude had been largely responsible, that they were enemies to the social welfare and were to be accounted a thing apart, a "third race." They were not, to be sure, proposing that they should make any compromise with

the world, or lower their Christian standard of life, but they did maintain that their new ideal order of things could be realized without removing themselves from the world, as their predecessors seemed to have thought would be necessary; and that, indeed, the greatest good fortune for society would be the recognition that Christianity was a proper part of the present order of existence. Christians desired to be known as a special people, but did not wish to be regarded as a people unsuited to life in Roman society.

This polemic on behalf of the social recognition of the Christian movement appears even as early as the Gospel of Luke, where the author by referring to contemporary events clearly shows his desire to relate the Christian movement more closely to contemporary history. In Acts the same author has manifestly endeavored to set Christianity in a distinctly favorable light in relation to the Roman state. The benefits accruing to the Empire from the presence of Christianity therein are emphasized by Justin in the middle of the second century, and still another Christian philospher, Melito, in an apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius, has given graphic expression to Christianity's

claim for recognition as a preservative of the Empire's welfare:

> Indeed, our philosophy formerly flourished among barbarians. But having sprung up among your subjects under the illustrious régime of your predecessor Augustus, to your Empire in particular it proved a dispensation of good. For ever since that time the Roman rule has increased in greatness and splendor. You have become the desirable successor to this sovereignty and shall thus continue with your son if you protect the philosophy which arising under Augustus grew up along with the Empire, and which your predecessors also honored along with the other religions. The strongest proof that our teaching, flourishing contemporaneously, was a boon to the Empire thus happily inaugurated, is the fact that no misfortune has occurred since the beginning of Augustus' rule, but that, on the contrary, splendor and glory are everywhere present, in accordance with the prayers of all your subjects.

III

During this period Christianity also enlarged its capacity for meeting a wider range of contemporary religious quests. But it was still true as in earlier times that its success was primarily due, not to an appeal made through the medium of intellectualism but to the increase of values accruing to membership in the worshiping community. The Roman world was more strongly than ever dominated by the desire for a supernaturally authenticated religion—a reli-

gion of concretely mediated redemption rather than one functioning primarily in the sphere of speculative interests or the realm of personal moral strivings.

From the time that the Gospel of Mark appeared, Christians had before their eyes the picture of a model Christian society inaugurated by Jesus in company with his disciples. Mark had conceived the idea that the establishment of the kingdom of God, while still awaiting its full and final realization through the return of Christ, had nevertheless been proleptically introduced into Palestine in Jesus' own day. It began with his public ministry, when he and his disciples constituted a unique social group—as it were, the first Christian community—by which the new order of things had been introduced. When John the Baptist completed his work the old order ceased, and when Jesus began his public ministry the new order, which was being perpetuated by the Christian societies in Mark's day, had dawned as a concrete fact in human affairs. This was Mark's philosophy of history.

With a few bold strokes of his brush, Mark portrays vividly certain benefits attending membership in the new order as exhibited in the career of its founder. Of chief significance is

the victory now secured over Satan and his evil demons. Certainly this was a well-chosen point of emphasis in presenting Christianity as a panacea for the ills of the gentile world. While the figure of satanic leadership over the demons is, of course, distinctly Jewish in type, the popular fear of angry divinities, and the longing for a supernatural deliverance from this danger, were indigenous factors in the religious quest of hosts of Gentiles.

One can hardly overestimate the powerful appeal which Mark's gospel was suited to make to large numbers of people in the Roman world. Herein they could learn that the Christian society claimed perfect immunity from the activities of the demons, since at the very outset the founder of the new movement had met the prince of demons, had overcome his temptations, and had bound him as effectively as does the robber bind the strong man whose house he proceeds to plunder. The first day of Jesus' public activity had, according to this picture, been given up almost exclusively to concrete demonstrations of his superiority over Satan and the evil spirits. In the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus had amazed the company by his power over that unclean spirit that left its

victim immediately on hearing Jesus' word of command. From the synagogue Jesus went directly to the house of Peter, where he healed a fever, which according to the thought of that time had been caused by demonic presence. And immediately Mark adds that when evening arrived "they brought unto him all that were sick and them that were possessed of demons, and all the city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons" (1:32–34).

But this is only the beginning of the story. A half-dozen verses farther on Mark adds that Jesus went throughout all of Galilee "preaching and casting out demons." In short, the characteristic task to which Jesus gives himself, particularly at the outset of his activity in the establishment of this new order of things, is to demonstrate his supernatural authority by casting out demons and healing the sick, two items which Mark for some reason specifies separately. In other respects, too, Jesus' demonstration of authority is unique. He declares himself to be competent to forgive sins. He is empowered also to set aside many legal requirements of the Jews, such as certain Sabbath laws and rules

pertaining to clean and unclean meats. Not only has he power to heal and to prescribe new rules for the conduct of life, but his authority extends even to the point of raising the dead, as demonstrated in the resuscitation of the deceased daughter of Jairus.

Still other features of the new movement are similarly authenticated in Mark's picture. An authorized leadership had been set up, when Jesus called "unto him whom he himself would" and gave to the twelve thus chosen the task of learning from him in order that "he might then send them forth to preach and to have authority to cast out demons" (3:13–15). Thus provision was made officially for carrying over to later generations the benefits which Jesus himself had guaranteed as the founder of the new movement. Even while Jesus was still alive, his representatives proved their ability to function as vehicles of this new authority, for when sent out by him on a certain mission, they, too, "cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (6:13).

The value of Christianity as a divine society is further enhanced by the secret wisdom which is available for all who have been initiated into its mysteries. By Mark this mystery-

character of Christianity goes back to Jesus himself, and was the occasion for his use of parables. Unto the Twelve only had it been permitted to know "the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without all things are done in parables." Or again, "without a parable spake he not unto them, but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things," thus preparing them to be properly equipped hierophants for initiating later generations into the mysteries of his new religion. Its privileges are not available to the public generally, but only to those who have secured for themselves the rights of membership in the society. Even Jesus does not distribute broadcast the benefits which he is able to confer; only those who exercise faith are entitled to his ministrations.

Mark's insistence upon faith as a preliminary condition to the performance of Jesus' miraculous works is sometimes taken to imply that the evangelist thought Jesus lacked ability to perform these wonderful healings for persons without faith. In the account of Jesus' disappointment at Nazareth this is what Mark seems to say, but does he mean to be so understood? Can he think that the Spirit-endowed Son of

God, who has authority to forgive men's sins and to set aside the Sabbath ordinances of the Jewish dispensation, who can walk upon the water and calm the waves and bend all the forces of nature to his will, is limited by the disposition of a sick man in choosing whether or not he would believe in Jesus' power to perform a miracle? Mark could hardly have so believed. The miracle was impossible, not because Jesus was inherently incapable of performing it regardless of limitations, but because a man without faith was unworthy of the favor. The question is not whether Jesus possesses the power but rather whether the individual has a right to the blessings which belong to the new order of things. If he is a man of faith, then he is privileged to share the opportunities of the new society. If he lacks faith, he stands outside the pale, and has no ground for claiming its supernatural services.

The Book of Acts offers still further evidences to the people of the ancient world to assure them that the Christian movement is a divinely ordered society. It is shown to be substantially grounded in history. At no time from the beginning of the Old Testament revelation, throughout the course of Jesus' career,

and up to the present moment, has Christianity as designed from the first by God ever been left to chance or accident. It is always under the care of the Almighty operating through the action of the Holy Spirit, which, while producing emotionalism and ecstasy in the early Christian society, nevertheless takes great pains to preserve orderly and institutionalized procedures. From the start, the new religion is a stable movement, definitely organized with a central government, expanding under the careful supervision of a stated leadership. The first act of the new assembly is to fill the office vacated by Judas, on the assumption that this defect in the organization must be corrected before the new religion can set out upon its active career. Thus it is provided with a body of overseers to guide officially the course of its developments. They have a set work to perform, consisting in witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus, delivering the proper teachings, working miracles, taking charge of the common fund, and punishing the disorderly. Even Paul is made institutionally respectable by being brought under the approval of the Jerusalem leaders, who had been divinely chosen to provide for adequate supervision of the new movement.

Throughout the second century the Christian society becomes an ever more formidable claimant for attention as the medium through which the gentile world's quest for a supernaturally guaranteed salvation can be properly satisfied. The value of baptism as a rite of initiation is enhanced by more careful attention to the performance of the ceremony. The proper formula to be used is determined more exactly and greater care is taken to have the rite authentically administered. It is now definitely affirmed to be a regenerating sacrament and a means of divine illumination—values which are realizable not simply in terms of an individual emotional experience accompanying the act but through an interpretation of the ceremony didactically viewed as the property of the community. By the end of the century Clement of Alexandria can say: "On being baptized we are illuminated; being illuminated, we are made sons of God; being made sons of God, we are perfected; being perfected, we become immortal."

A similar heightening in the direction of institutional sacredness attaches to the Lord's Supper. Sometimes it functions as an offering, deriving its sanction from the sacrificial system

of the Old Testament. Or again it is a truly sacramental food such as had been familiar to the Gentiles before their espousal of Christianity. The participant is no longer personally responsible, as in the time of Paul, for discerning the body and the blood. The formal institution itself now guarantees its own efficacy. The members of the Christian society who are nourished upon this sacred food can speak of it as a "medicine of immortality," and can even rest faith in their own ultimate resurrection of the body on the ground that in partaking of the Eucharist they have been building up realistically in their own physical systems an actual flesh and blood of Christ which cannot be given over to corruption.

Realistic elements of satisfaction in the common religious quest were further increased within the Christian movement through the development in this period of what is usually called its Christology. The quest for a supernaturally mediated salvation had found a measure of satisfaction through linking up the founder of the Christian movement with the revelation contained in the Old Testament, and through the supernatural features displayed in the gospel accounts of Jesus' earthly career.

But the community in the conduct of its own life, in its hymns and its prayers and its devotional attitudes, was virtually worshiping its hero-founder in the person of the heavenly Christ. In this functional aspect he was the Christian's own peculiar God. Whatever speculative theologians might say, the Jesus to whom the Christians felt themselves attached was a veritable deity for the social group itself, as also for individual members of the worshiping group. In the second century Christians were not endeavoring with anything like the zeal exhibited by Paul to persuade the Gentiles that their hope lay in allegiance to the historic God of the Hebrews. So far as the emotional reactions of the community itself were concerned, they had all been developing more and more in the direction of loyalty to Christ in his status as a heavenly being to whom they rendered worship.

By the end of the second century, in fact considerably before, Jesus had become for the community in very truth a deity, who historically was so closely allied with humanity as to be able to perform on behalf of mortals the particular services of which they stood in need but who at the same time was so thoroughly divine

as to be able to furnish a fully authenticated supernatural redemption. One ought to note that the peculiar problem of the theologian in this age was, not to persuade the Christian groups to think more of Christ and to give him a higher position more nearly equal to that of God, but rather to save the prestige of God himself; or perhaps better, to save Christianity from the criticism of intellectual opponents who accused Christians of allegiance to two deities, one the God of the Old Testament and the other the Christ worshiped in the services of the community and thus elevated to the place of Deity in the reverence of the individual. But so far as worship and piety were concerned, Christ's position was perfectly safe. His worth for the community was supreme. For the rank and file the christological issue scarcely existed, for it had already been settled before it was raised, and settled by the test of social values. It was in his capacity as this human, divine Savior-God who had established a religious society for the benefit of needy humanity, and who now furnished that society with full supernatural equipment, that Christ satisfied most adequately the religious quest of the gentile world at large.

In a more normal area of experience life within the Christian society also offered augmented attractions. The Christians early acquired a wide reputation for the practice of brotherly love. In their care for the sick, the needy, those in prison, or other unfortunate members of their group, their fame for devotion to their brethren spread throughout that world far beyond the limits of their own society. For a struggling artisan or day-laborer, membership in the Christian community insured not only shelter and food when he arrived in a strange city but also the vigorous assistance of his Christian brethren in securing for him an opportunity to earn a livelihood. Any Christian who might be overtaken by sudden misfortune through loss of health, loss of goods, imprisonment, banishment, or even death, was assured of suitable ministrations to relieve the needs of his present distress or to give him a respectable burial.

During the last quarter of the first century, and throughout the second, the capacity of Christianity for satisfying the religious needs felt by Gentiles rapidly increased. Whether one desired protection from dreaded powers of evil, or a sense of personal satisfaction through participation in sacraments, or instructions

from a divine book that had been handed down from a remote antiquity, or assurances of union with a Savior-God, truly human in his sympathies and truly divine in his character, or a feeling of social security realized through membership in a select company of one's fellows, all cherishing like interests and like purposes, or even a more material good in the economic advantages resulting from patronage secured through membership in the society—whether it was one or all of these things that one desired, the Christian movement by the last quarter of the second century was in a position to meet very fully the demands made upon its power. By a gradual process of growth it had come to include a wide variety of interests within the range of its activities, its whole social system was now regarded as specifically authenticated by deity, and hence it was thought to be capable of furnishing mortals perfect guidance in their quest for safety amid all of the supernatural forces resident in their environment.

IV

Although each assembly was ideally a divine community, as the Christians multiplied in numbers and the movement spread over wider areas,

experience soon demonstrated the need of some very specific forms of human control to counteract forces of disintegration that manifested themselves with increased frequency. The situation demanded a more definite centralization of authority within the individual communities, as well as some device for securing both greater solidarity among neighboring groups in contiguous territories and a more permanent unity of Christendom as a whole throughout the entire Mediterranean world.

The churches of the post-apostolic age were no more immune from a disposition to break up into cliques and to entertain rival interests then had been the case in the gentile communities with whom Paul labored. But when there no longer existed any vigorous individual leader who might suitably claim for himself the prestige of apostolic authority to act as the final judge between the contending parties, it became necessary to discover some other overseership. Failure at this point would certainly have resulted in serious difficulties for, if not speedy disintegration of, the Christian groups. This was no mere fanciful danger, but a very real menace already evidenced by the rise of certain troublesome minor sects—"heretics" as they

were commonly called—who found life in association with the majority uncongenial, and consequently specialized on their own distinctive interests for which sometimes they were aggressive missionaries among their Christian brethren.

Heresy was fundamentally a social phenomenon rather than an intellectual problem. Differences of opinion, that were always present even in the most peaceful community, never resulted in heresies until rival social attitudes crystallized around specific centers of interest and thus gave real vitality to the opinions in question. And the zeal with which heretics were attacked found its principal incentive in a desire on the part of Christian leaders to preserve intact the membership of the Christian groups whose unity was being endangered by the propagandist minorities. Hence the immediate effect of heresy, particularly during the second century, was to stimulate the rise within the Christian movement of a new interest in an authoritative leadership.

The necessity for the presence of one authoritative head in a local community resulted in the recognition of the bishop's supremacy. Thus the informal functionary, previously called by

this name because of the services which he rendered the local group as an overseer or helper in the conduct of its affairs, now became a duly recognized officer who assumed supervision over all preaching, teaching, and ritualistic observances in connection with the community's life. Similarly, some outstanding church with an especially large membership, or one situated in the principal city, cast the shadow of its authority over the smaller churches in the vicinity, and thus its bishop's word became law for the entire district.

Perhaps of even more significance for the growth and establishment of the Christian movement were those phases of its structure devised to serve the interests of the movement at large, to conserve its solidarity, to give unity to its purposes and activities, and to supply means of control that would operate over the whole area of Christendom. To be sure, the consciousness of Christian solidarity was not at all a peculiar product of this age. In Paul's day, the "church of God" had an ideal unity, but its realization was a future hope rather than a present fact. In the second century deliberate and earnest endeavors were made to convert this supernatural ideality of

earlier times into concrete forms of institutional reality, thoroughly supernaturally guaranteed, of course, but capable of concrete realization through the activity of definite human agencies.

Originally it had been the self-claimed privilege of an apostle to give authoritative advice to the assemblies. Without hesitation Paul delivered his commands to the various Christian groups whom he had gathered, informing them curtly that he had ordained thus and so in all the churches. The visit which he and Barnabas made to Jerusalem to discuss with the Palestinian leaders the conditions upon which Gentiles were to be admitted to the Christian community showed how thoroughly the movement even thus early had adopted the notion of guidance by the apostles. But in the course of time the apostles died, and in the nature of the case their office could not be perpetuated. To allow that apostles could still be called afresh through the immediate intervention of Jesus would have left the destinies of the Christian communities at the mercy of an unregulated Spirit-control now felt to be inadequate, if not indeed dangerous, to the common welfare. It was a belated endeavor which the Montanists made, and one quite out

of accord with the signs of the times, when in the latter part of the second century they advocated direct guidance by the Spirit and sought to restore to a position of supremacy the spontaneity and enthusiasm of earlier days.

The majority of Christendom devised a way more satisfactory to itself for preserving the ideal of apostolic guidance. The apostles might be dead, but they were survived by their appointees in various churches, and these ecclesiastical diadochi were, in turn, followed by their own epigones. While history had not preserved the apostolate, it had produced an apostolic succession. The line of descent led from Christ through the apostles down to the bishops who at the moment were presiding over the affairs of the society. But in case bishops differed among themselves, safety could be made secure only by relegating final authority to some important center, such, for example, as Rome. Before the end of the second century this ideal found expression in Irenaeus who would insure social unity by looking for guidance to "the greatest, most ancient, and well-known church, founded by two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, at Rome." On this authority it was possible to "confute all those who in any way, either for

self-seeking or vain-glory, or blindness, or badness hold unauthorized meetings."

In its further quest for norms of control that would function with apostolic force, the Christian society assembled a group of its own writings to be read side by side with the Old Testament in the worship of the community. Ever since Paul's time there had circulated more or less abundantly among various Christian groups letters, fragments of sermons, narratives of the life and teaching of Jesus, and other documents called forth by the activities of the Christian societies in the course of their evolution. These books had long been read in the Christian assemblies, but not as Scripture. Their practical value for stimulating ideals or serving the purposes of admonition and guidance, gave them from the start a significant place in the life of the group. Often the name of the individual who had composed the document was unknown and its value depended simply upon its content. Perhaps even in the case of documents of known authorship, such as Paul's letters, it was at the outset respect for the author as an individual and not any formal theory regarding his apostolic authority that carried weight with the reader. But continued use

soon gave rise to feelings of sanctity resulting in an attitude toward the Christian writings that undoubtedly amounted virtually to canonization of the books, so far as the popular estimate in which they were held was concerned, long before they were formally constituted into a New Testament.

What formal canonization really meant was an authoritative delimitation of books which might properly be read in the church, rather than the elevation to a new position of dignity of certain writings formerly held in lower esteem. The society, by the normal processes of its own life, had settled for itself the question of esteem. But if Christianity as a whole was to maintain uniformity and to be close knit about a common interest, it was desirable that all the groups should accept as normative the same collection of Christian writings. Hence the leaders of Christianity in the second century undertook to determine just what books might be regarded as sufficiently ancient and authoritative to be read in the meetings of the various churches, and for these books they affirmed a formal apostolic authority. Henceforth the church possessed a new instrument of control in the interests of the unity and solidarity of Christen-

dom as a whole. Thus a body of values that already existed in the community in functioning form was elevated to a more formal position of authority in answer to the demand of the hour.

In addition to the apostolic official and the apostolic book, during this same period Christianity evolved a third instrument of control in the form of the apostolic faith. While heresy was always fundamentally a social problem, rather than one of dogmatic speculation, the content of religious teaching and opinion was often debated. Especially by the minority agitators who troubled the church was emphasis frequently placed upon non-conformity of opinion. These heretical leaders often were more interested in speculative propositions than in the consolidation of their own social groups. Had they, in fact, given more attention to the social organization of their cause, undoubtedly in many instances it would have been much more effective and permanent. On the other hand, the majority groups were concerned primarily to maintain social continuity, and always demanded that the test of truth should be, not logic or philosophical analysis, but conformity to the opinion of the church as expressed in its authoritative leadership—its Old Testament, its

apostolic officials, and its apostolic books. Nevertheless there was a measure of interest manifest in defining also the content of its beliefs in terms of apostolic authority. It should be recognized, however, that as yet creedal definition was not at all the primary concern of the Christian society, but was a matter forced upon its attention by dissenting members or minority parties.

The outcome of this initial interest in formulating dogma was the so-called Apostles' Creed, concerning which Irenaeus somewhat extravagantly affirms that "this faith the church, although scattered over the whole world, diligently observes as if it occupied but one house, and believes as if it had but one mind, and preaches and teaches as if it had but one mouth." But strange to say no two authorities in the ancient church agree exactly in their statement of this creed, and certain of them, such as Tertullian, cite it on different occasions in divergent language.

When one places the Christian movement as it existed in Roman society about the year 70 side by side with the same movement a hundred years later, many elements in the comparison arrest attention. One is particularly struck

by the fact that the picturesque features of the earlier portrait, depicting the spontaneous activities of a group operating under the power of its immediate enthusiasms, with little or no formal organization, have given place to the more somber hues of a mechanically organized society with a comparatively highly developed structure, discharging its functions with sobriety in conformity with specified norms of authority. But if one asks which type of organization rendered the new Christian cause the better service in attracting to its membership converts from the contemporary Roman world, in securing for the movement a recognized place in the society of the day, and in stabilizing and consolidating its power as it faced the future in conflict with many rivals, including even the Roman state authorities, one's answer can only be congratulation for the Christian groups of the second century. Christianity was now a well-organized movement consolidated within itself, and strongly entrenched in the Roman Empire, ready for the struggle with hostile agencies that were to be brought more forcibly into action during the two succeeding centuries.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT WITH RIVALS

Although the Christian movement by the close of the second century had developed a substantial structure of its own, its position within Roman society was as yet by no means finally secure. In fact, during the next century the hostility which had already exhibited itself at several places in sporadic outbursts of violence was due to increase in its intensity, and to spread over much wider areas. The causes of hostility emanated no longer simply from individuals or local groups who felt that their interests had suffered by the presence of the Christian movement in their community. During the latter part of the third and the early years of the fourth century the occasional outbreaks of vigorous persecution against Christianity were in reality symptoms of those volcanic rumblings that were already threatening the very foundations of Roman society.

During the period of Christianity's final conflict with rivals, the world was to witness the

gradual disintegration of that institution known as the Roman Empire, which had begun its glorious career in the time of Augustus and had continued in practically undisturbed peace and prosperity, at least so far as outward appearances were concerned, to the close of the reign of Marcus Aurelius in 180 A.D. On more than one occasion Christians had sought to bring their cause into favor by calling the attention of the authorities to the fact that the Empire's beginnings, and its continued glory, had been coincident with the rise and growth of the Christian movement. One was to infer that the prayers of the Christians and their presence in society were genuine elements of safety which should be nourished if future prosperity were to be assured.

If the Christian movement's success had depended upon the stability of the imperial system, its triumph would have been short-lived. It won state recognition barely in time to witness the break-up of the Roman government and the rise of a new political order with the incoming of the barbarians. The imperial régime was no longer capable of insuring the permanence of Christianity, nor on the contrary were Christians able to make good their earlier claim that imperial approval of their cause

would give to the government itself new guaranties of permanent safety. While this Christian claim had been made in all good faith, it was in essence but a survival of the old Roman notion that the Empire was a divine institution and therefore incapable of cessation when its future was insured by the favor of heaven. Pagans and Christians alike stood aghast at the early successes of the barbarian invaders. Jerome gave expression to the agony that filled many hearts, when on learning of the capture of Rome by Alaric in 410 A.D., he exclaimed:

> I was so stupified and dismayed that day and night I could think of nothing but the welfare of all the community. . . . . When the bright light of all the world was put out, or rather, when the Roman Empire was decapitated and, to speak more correctly, the whole world perished in one city, "I became dumb and humbled myself and kept silence from good words, but my grief broke out afresh, my heart glowed within me, and while I meditated, the fire was kindled."

The Empire did not save Christianity, nor did Christianity save the Empire. Each was a factor of great importance in the history of that ancient world, but the destiny of each was to be determined by the more fundamental character of the society itself. At first Christianity and the state came into bitter conflict and sub-

sequently joined hands, but the forces which shaped the course of the history, both as respects the political institutions on the one hand and Christianity as a movement within Roman society on the other, lay deep in the nature of the total social process. The situation within the Empire as a whole has to be surveyed if one would understand the truly genetic forces that operated to produce the conflict between Christianity and its rivals, as well as to determine the outcome of the struggle.

I

Like all good imperialists, Pliny the Elder could say of his own country that it had been chosen by deity

> to unite the scattered empires of the earth, to bestow a polish upon men's manners, to unite the discordant and uncouth dialects of so many different nations by the powerful ties of one common language, to confer the enjoyments of discourse and of civilization upon mankind, to become, in short, the mother-country of all nations of the earth.

But this very success of Rome's imperial program proved her undoing. As a result of world-empire, her society became so complex and contained so many diverse elements that it became increasingly impossible to maintain traditional attitudes and preserve existing institutions.

The disturbances that inevitably attended the process of transition resulted in great unrest as well as serious disaster for large elements of society.

While centuries are but fractions of a second on the dial of the world's chronological clock, to persons living amidst the realities of daily existence in the Roman Empire during the first two centuries of its history, a feeling of satisfaction with the stability of the existing order must have been widely prevalent. The political institutions of the time functioned effectively to produce protection for the individual and the community as well as the preservation of unity throughout the whole extent of the Roman world. Commercial and industrial activities proceeded undisturbed, and economic prosperity followed in their train. Spain and Britain provided rich mines, while Gaul was a source of agricultural wealth. The East, on the other hand, yielded an abundance of articles of glass and jewelry, textiles, purples, and other products that stimulated a rich trade between the different parts of the Empire, and that reached even as far as India and China.

Also in its local aspects, society seemed to have attained a large measure of satisfaction

and well-being. The machinery of government had been passing more and more into the hands of the emperor and his personal executives, thus relieving the people of civic responsibility, and insuring for them the exercise of one central policy throughout not only Italy but the provinces as well. Many an emperor issued decrees designed to protect citizens, to care for the poor, to stimulate agriculture and trade, to support orphans and needy parents, to provide public buildings and entertainments, and in general to make the lot of the citizen safe and enjoyable. These conditions were true not alone of the people in Italy, but of the inhabitants of the Empire in general.

While on the surface Roman society thus appeared to exhibit a condition of peace and apparent prosperity, which had endured for well-nigh two hundred years and which therefore might be inferred to be permanent, a few soundings into the depths of the social stream would have revealed not far beneath the surface many features that might have constituted a genuine warning for the future. The very multiplicity of social interests and attitudes that resulted from the mingling of so many peoples of different heritages and different stocks con-

stituted one very serious element of disintegration that struck at the very roots of the old Roman spirit. In earlier days Rome had exhibited a distinctive social psychology characterized by an attitude of national pride and devotion which gave to her an unusually efficient type of leader in both civic and military affairs. Under the Empire this rugged nationalism of earlier days was gradually supplanted, even in Italy, by a cosmopolitan and individualistic psychology which in time inevitably sucked the very life-blood out of Roman imperialism. The paid appointees of an emperor now took over municipal responsibility which formerly had been discharged by leading individuals of the community not only without profit to themselves in a financial way but often at a distinct expense. And the army was no longer composed of men who fought for love of their country, but of foreign mercenaries to whom soldiering was simply a business venture.

The economic factors in the situation were a further indication of approaching trouble. The expense of maintaining the army as well as the other agencies of government was tremendously increased through the adoption of the imperial policy. Also the plan which emperors

had followed of lavishing expenditures upon public works such as baths and temples and theaters, together with the upkeep of these institutions, proved to be a burden which many rulers found it impossible to carry except as they imposed heavy taxation upon their subjects or confiscated the private property of wealthy citizens. Such outlays of money yielding no productive return were sure to bring embarrassing results.

The personnel of society had also undergone a marked change, constituting a sign of the times that for even the least venturesome social prophet might easily have foreboded imminent danger. The development of individualism had naturally drawn large numbers of the population toward the cities and away from the country districts. This had meant a rapid decline in agricultural activity, and had added to the urban population larger numbers of persons depending upon ephemeral forms of occupation for the earning of a livelihood. At the same time, the great increase in the number of slaves, and the disposition of the more substantial elements in the community to despise manual labor, all tended to produce within society features that were detrimental to the economic prosper-

ity of the whole. It would not have been difficult for a student of economic conditions to perceive that at the time of the death of Marcus Aurelius the Roman Empire was virtually bankrupt.

On the outskirts of the Empire lay a still more serious menace which had not yet dawned upon the consciousness of the rank and file, but which must have been clearly apparent to the rulers themselves during the latter days of the Antonines. This was the rising tide of invasion which had been gradually increasing in force all along the Rhine and the Danube as well as on the eastern border. The Roman legions who guarded the Empire's frontier were no longer composed of vigorous Italian troops such as Caesar had led in his conquest of the Gauls and in his war with the Germans. The army now was itself largely barbarian, or at best provincial, and was inspired by no masterful ideals of devotion to a native land. Under these circumstances the efficiency of the military arm of government suffered serious diminution.

A danger which proved even more effective in bringing about disaster was the lack of a dependable political machinery for producing a stable leadership. The senate and the emperors

constituted essentially two rival authorities, between which an adequate adjustment of function had never been established. In imperial times the army, now created and maintained by the emperor, often set itself up as the supreme authority by refusing obedience to either the senate or its imperial appointee, and proclaiming as emperor its own favorite general. These elements of possible discord did not become apparent under the régime of strong rulers, but they offered a danger which was realized to the full in the century succeeding the death of Marcus Aurelius.

The pathetic story of Rome's unhappy political history during the third century of the present era is too familiar to need repetition. It was a period of anarchy and decline which contrasted very sharply with the history of the two preceding centuries. Yet the change was not so sudden as might appear on the surface, but was the culmination of tendencies that had been taking shape for several generations. The smoldering embers of discord now simply blazed into flames. The political machinery broke down. Rulers were set up and removed in rapid succession, sometimes by the senate, and sometimes by the army, but rarely did society

profit through the change. The barbarians pressed more insistently upon the frontiers, and broke through in large numbers into Roman territory. Attempts to resist them by force were only partially and temporarily successful. Any national consciousness on the part of the population of the Empire failed to function. Patriotic interest was rapidly dying, while individuals and communities sought as best they could to conserve their own interests in the midst of the general decline. Loyalty and devotion to the common welfare seemed unable to find any new focal points about which they might gather for united action.

Economic distress rapidly increased with the decline of agriculture, industry, and commerce. The mines were closed, either on account of lack of laborers or because the territory had been overrun by invaders. The falling off of productivity and the increasing expenses of the state resulted in much deflation of the currency, while poverty increased and taxes rose and the price of the necessities of life greatly multiplied. In consequence of invasion by the barbarians, the outlying territories of the Empire had been largely depopulated, while even in more protected sections the inhabitants

had diminished as a result of war and decline of prosperity and numerous epidemics.

The heroic efforts of Diocletian (284–305 A.D.) to block the oncoming tide of disaster by introducing a series of thoroughgoing reforms had only a temporary effect. But the character of his reforms shows the nature of the difficulties which this far-seeing emperor truly appreciated. He recognized the necessity for a radical revision of the political organization, but the plan which he proposed for the maintenance of a permanent government also proved inadequate. His reorganization of the civil administration and his efforts at economic reform are more significant as disclosing the status of society than as remedies for its evils. And the importance which he attached to religious reforms is a clear indication of the extent to which the people of the Roman Empire still felt the necessity for supernatural sanctions to guarantee the safety of society.

II

The misfortunes which fell in rapid succession upon Roman society during the third century had a very close relationship to the religious interests and activities of the period. The Roman people from the very beginning of their

national history had placed great emphasis upon religion as the indispensable condition of national prosperity. The maintenance of religious ceremonies by the officials of state was no mere superficial gesture having only the appearance of piety. On the contrary, rulers and people were alike sincere, for the most part at any rate, in the characteristic Roman attitude of reverence toward supernatural powers. In connection with the establishment of the Empire, Augustus had instituted special religious ceremonies, and had called upon poets and statesmen to assist in paying reverence to the gods and in making clear that heaven, by divine decree, had not only founded the Roman nation at the outset but had foreordained that its history should issue in the establishment of permanent world-supremacy.

One who dismisses the official religious program of the Romans as merely a matter of astute political policy on the part of emperors and their associates all too readily ascribes to them a degree of sophistication quite out of accord with probability. If they deceived the populace it is also true, at least in most instances, that they likewise deceived themselves. To credit men of a prescientific age with twentieth-century objec-

tivity in their attitude toward the supernatural is an unjustifiable anachronism. Even the most consistent Epicurean believed at least in the reality of the gods, although he denied to them any concern with the affairs of mortals.

Among the populace pious feeling was present in a very high degree. It expressed itself not alone in reverence for the traditional gods of the old Roman religion, and in the newly instituted cult of the emperors, but also in the ready attachment which many people formed with the oriental deities who were now thoroughly at home in the Roman world. Statesmen and populace were at one in their readiness to believe that the disasters which befell the Empire were due to the anger of the deities. A theory of society which ascribed success to supernatural favor naturally traced failure to a similar occult source. Accordingly the authorities on occasion undertook to determine if possible what particular persons or what forms of social activity were responsible for the many misfortunes which they desired to avert.

It was not difficult to discover that there were two elements in society which consistently refused to honor the popular gods. These two factions were the Jews and the Christians. But

the Jews had so long held an established place in the social order, while the Christian movement was so comparatively new, that the popular attention fixed itself more especially upon Christianity. Its adherents had displayed a marked attitude of non-conformity in the presence of heathen customs, and when some of them were put to the test they refused to offer incense to Caesar's image or to pronounce him Lord. The Christians themselves did not intend that this refusal should be understood as an expression of disloyalty to the government, but that their actions would generally be so interpreted by outsiders was under the circumstances quite inevitable. Here, then, was the recalcitrant element in society which in popular opinion was responsible for the accumulated disasters that were falling in rapid succession upon the unfortunate state.

This distrust of Christianity had crystallized into definite opposition at Rome as early as the time of Nero, when he took advantage of the social unpopularity of the Christian movement to divert from himself the suspicion of having burned Rome. During the next century hostility assumed acute form now and again at different places in the Empire, and certain prom-

inent individuals in the Christian movement were victims of violence. During the first half of the third century a similar situation prevailed. The local and sporadic character of these so-called persecutions should be kept in mind, however, and should not be unduly magnified by reading into this portion of the history conditions that were true only of a subsequent age. Up to the year 250 the imperial authorities had not instituted any systematic and thoroughgoing persecution of Christians in conformity with a definitely determined policy consistently applied to the entire Empire. Action had been severe at times, but it had been in the nature of local outbursts, and had been inspired by local conditions rather than by the imposition of any general imperial decree.

Christianity in the meantime had been growing constantly in strength and establishing itself more firmly in society. It had developed a consciousness of solidarity that gave to its members a confidence and determination which enabled them to face the unhappy conditions in Roman society with much greater equanimity than their neighbors could muster. Christians were confident in their cause, and the blows of opposition which had fallen upon them had not

yet been sufficiently frequent and severe to trouble greatly the rank and file. The sober statement of Origen is suggestive in this connection:

> With regard to Christians, because they were taught not to avenge themselves upon their enemies and have thus observed laws of a mild and philanthropic character, and because, although they were able, yet they would not have made war even if they had received authority to do so, for this cause they have obtained this from God, that he has always warred on their behalf and at times has restrained those who rose up against them and who wished to destroy them. For in order to remind others that seeing a few engaged in a struggle in behalf of religion they might also be better fitted to despise death, a few at various times, and these easily numbered, have endured death for the sake of the Christian religion, God not permitting the whole nation of Christians to be exterminated, but desiring that it should continue, and that the whole world should be filled with this salvation and the doctrines of this religion.

The conflict between the Christian movement and contemporary heathen society took on a new form in the year 250, when the Emperor Decius began a formal persecution of Christianity as an outstanding feature of his plans for restoring the health of the Empire. He inaugurated a definite policy by which he proposed to bring the Christians into line with the interests of the state. It is not difficult to perceive that he was hounded by a fear of the

growing power of the Christian movement and the possibility that it might throw its influence against the government in a critical situation. But he was also moved very deeply by the feeling that the Empire was divided in its loyalty to the supernatural powers, and that the Christians were in this respect the greatest of offenders. With the insight of a statesman he proceeded with greatest vigor, not against the individual members of the Christian communities, but more particularly against their leaders, in this way hoping to crush the movement by depriving it of official direction.

Although Decius died the next year in a war with the barbarians, his policy had set an example to be followed by successive rulers at periods when an especially earnest effort was put forth to restore the fortunes of the declining Empire. In the year 258, under Valerian, the government took action decreeing that all the clergy should be put to death by the sword and that Christian men of rank should be degraded while their property was confiscated. But Valerian's death in 268 brought respite again for Christians, and they suffered no further interference from the state until Diocletian instituted his famous reforms. For several years he carried on his

work of reconstruction along other lines without an attempt to correct the religious situation, so far as the Christians were concerned. Evidently they had already attained so prominent a position in society that Diocletian was loath to undertake a persecution. But finally he yielded to what he must inevitably have regarded as a serious duty. If the Empire was to be given unity and perpetuity the worship of all the gods must be established, and to have so large a block of society refuse to worship the national gods or the deities who had been adopted in more recent times by the state, constituted a menace that must be removed. Not because he hated the Christians individually, or had any quarrel with their doctrines as such, but rather because by their conduct they obstructed the way to the establishment of social solidarity on a safe supernatural basis, he instituted in the year 303 the bloodiest persecution that the Christian movement was ever called upon to endure.

The retirement of Diocletian in the year 305 was the signal for another disruption of the government. For several years different aspirants contended with one another for the possession of power. Christianity had now

become so important a factor in society that the advisability of courting Christian favor could readily be appreciated. Certain leaders were disposed to patronize the Christians, and others catered to their opponents. Persecution was still carried on in some sections of the Empire, while in other portions the Christians remained unmolested, or efforts were actually put forth to win their favor. They were never again to be the objects of a vigorous general persecution embracing the whole Empire, as in the days of Decius and Valerian or in the later years of Diocletian.

The imperial persecutors never had been prompted by a desire to wipe out Christianity as a system of religious beliefs, but rather to bring Christians into line with a religious practice that would secure the safety of the government. Christians would have been allowed to worship their own Christ unmolested had they at the same time been willing to render due reverence to the deities of the state. Nor did Romans as a rule doubt the existence of any divinity or divinities that a sect might worship, but when the rites of these cults were thought to constitute a menace to public welfare the authorities proceeded against them, as had been done on cer-

tain occasions in the case of Christianity's predecessors. But when new religions had acquired strength and popularity, their success seemed to attest the power of their respective gods, which were then adopted by the state in the enlargement of that supernatural area from which it sought protection. Since the Roman's deities were not "jealous" gods, any number of new divinities might be adopted if reverence for the ancient gods was not denied.

This characteristic religious psychology of the Romans made possible a sincere change of attitude on the part of the emperors when it was discovered that persecution could not bring Christians to worship the gods of the state. In this event nothing was gained by proceeding against the new religionists, while such help as their lesser divinity might render the state—and probably emperors were as ready to believe in the existence of the Christian's god as in the existence of deities peculiar to other cults—was being lost through the policy of persecution. The success of the religion, and the strength it evidenced under opposition, was a testimony of its divinity's ability to influence society, and hence it might be wiser procedure for the state to court his favor.

In all probability this attitude of mind is just that represented by Galerius in the edict of toleration which he issued shortly before his death. As a practical statesman he had observed the failure of the persecution and had adopted a policy of compromise, hoping thereby to accomplish a beneficial result for the Empire. If the Christians would not worship the gods of the state, then let them worship their own God, seeking from him such help as he might be able to give the government. Christians had proved to be more numerous and to represent a more substantial element of society than the emperor had suspected and further persecution would only work harm to the general welfare. A better plan would be to solicit the aid of the Christians. Accordingly, in his decree of toleration he admonishes them that "they ought to pray their God for our good estate, for that of the commonwealth, and for their own, that the commonwealth may endure on every side unharmed and that they may be able to live securely in their own homes."

III

When Constantine and his colleague Licinius issued their famous decree tolerating Chris-

tianity, they were inspired not so much by personal interest in the Christian religion as by concern for the welfare of Roman society. They entertained exactly the same attitude toward the supernatural that had always been characteristic of emperors. It was their earnest desire that all of their subjects should be praying to the gods, not simply to the traditional gods of the ancient state, but to all of the gods whether new or old, for the rulers and for the commonwealth. Moreover, they were sufficiently wise as statesmen to desire to bring harmony into society in order that undivided attention might be given to the immediate problems of earning a livelihood and preserving the resources of the state in a helpful condition. The maintenance of social unity and well-being was their primary concern.

That the social welfare of the Empire was the dominant motive behind the action of Constantine and Licinius is clearly evident from certain sentences by which they indicate their intention. They specify concretely that their action had in view "the advantage and security of the state." Believing it to be necessary for the safety of the state to provide its subjects suitable opportunity to call upon divine powers,

they declared that it seemed good to them, "in the very first place to set in order the conditions of the reverence paid to the divinity by giving to the Christians and all others full permission to follow whatever worship any man had chosen." They were careful to reaffirm this universal tolerance, the aim of which was, as they say, "the quiet of our times so that every man may have freedom in the practice of whatever worship he has chosen, and these things were done by us that nothing be taken away from any honor or form of worship." This purpose was emphasized still a third time, when they expressed the hope that "the divine favor which we have already experienced in so many affairs shall continue for all time to give us prosperity and success, together with happiness for the state."

Now that Christianity's hold upon society had become so strong as to command imperial recognition, in spite of all attempts that had been made to bring its adherents into conformity with traditional practice, the new religion was in a position to profit very greatly by the edict of toleration. It had built up its own structure in substantial fashion even under the strain of vigorous opposition, and its forces of propa-

ganda had proved so efficient that it had been able to increase its membership rapidly during the preceding years. With the new prestige of state approval, it was now prepared to win for itself an increasing measure of imperial patronage.

Evidently Constantine's primary aim in tolerating Christianity had not been a desire to aid this particular religion, but rather to bring unity and prosperity to his Empire. In fact his dominant interest was political unification, and social well-being determined his treatment of Christianity during his entire rule. His favor for this religion grew, while he gradually developed an attitude of greater disfavor toward the other cults, as he found in Christianity a more efficient instrument for the preservation of the Empire's welfare. Really his imperial approval of the Christian religion did not initiate Christianity's success in any fundamental way; it only stamped the movement as already successful and capable, in the eyes of this far-seeing statesman, of serving the needs of imperial society better than could the other cults. Thus Constantine's growing favor is less a cause than a result of Christianity's growing power.

Various factors contributed toward Christianity's rise to favor in the Empire. In the first place, when the break came between Constantine and his colleague, Licinius, in 323, the latter apparently had sought the favor of pagans by persecuting Christians in his territory and thus Constantine was prompted to show a new measure of favor for this section of society which he might now regard as his own special supporters. Furthermore, the expense of maintaining the religious activities of the Empire—and the economic problem was always a serious one for an emperor—could be considerably reduced by making Christianity the favored religion of the state. It was an expensive undertaking to support a state religion after the accustomed manner, for such a religion derived its chief income from the public funds. Temples were built at public expense, priesthoods were maintained, sacrifices were provided, and moneys had to be supplied for the maintenance of festivals and other celebrations. On the other hand, Christianity was already a self-supporting institution, hence it would require much less financial outlay on the part of the state to come to terms of understanding with this already prosperous cult, possessed of a vigorous organi-

zation quite capable of maintaining its own financial efficiency. To establish an economic bond with this institution would involve a relatively small financial burden, as compared with the continuation of state support for the heathen cults. Consequently at an early date in his career Constantine began the policy of making financial grants to Christianity, and withdrawing aid from the older cults.

Undoubtedly Constantine was also sufficiently religious in the original Roman sense to see, in the growing prosperity of Christianity and in the overthrow of his rivals who had sought their divine assistance from religions opposed to the Christian movement, an expression of the favorable will of Providence for the new religion. Accordingly he fell into line with what seemed to him to be the divine will and increased his favor for Christianity. He made gifts, granted immunities, and enacted legislation, distinctly in its favor, while others of his enactments tended toward a mild repression of heathenism. Since Christians had refused to adopt the policy of toleration which Constantine originally promulgated, it was impossible to secure for the Empire a status of permanent peace through any effort to persuade Chris-

tianity and the pagan cults to exist amicably side by side. It had also proved impracticable to restore unity to society by attempting to overthrow Christianity. Hence the only alternative was to adopt a program of suppression for the other religions. This policy began to emerge in the time of Constantine, and came to full fruitage under his successors.

Constantine's interest in maintaining the safety of the Empire through establishing a united society is interestingly manifested in the heroic efforts which he made to bring together into harmony different contending parties within Christendom. He seems to have been greatly shocked to discover that in North Africa the church was bitterly divided into two contending parties—the Donatist controversy. The actual questions at issue did not concern him, but as he says, it did seem to him "a very serious thing that in those provinces which divine Providence has freely intrusted to my devotedness, and in which there is a great population, the multitudes are found following the baser course, and dividing as it were into two parties." Similarly his interest in the famous Arian controversy did not focus about the question of creedal definition but he was greatly concerned

to eliminate from Eastern Christianity the social disruption which was being occasioned by the continuation of the debate. Here again in the course of time he found that his policy of toleration could not be established even between two contending Christian parties. If unity was to be restored to society it could be accomplished only by the elevation of one group of contestants over the other, and the consequent suppression of the minor party. Social, not doctrinal, motivation determined his action.

Thus it came about that during the period of growing favor for the new religion, Christianity availed itself of the imperial authority not alone for the suppression of all rival cults, but also for the purpose of wiping out minority parties within the movement. The situation was one of characteristic social evolution in which rival human interests were at play, and in which groups set themselves up one against another seeking to obtain possession of the agencies of social control for use in the service of their own particular interests. A decree of Theodosius in the year 392 marked the climax of Christianity's struggle for imperial authority to suppress all rival cults throughout the Empire and all minority movements within

the Christian society. But the very fact that Christianity was socially conditioned in a broad and thoroughgoing way made impossible the attainment of its final success merely through the enactment of an imperial decree. While it had now won for itself control of the political arm of Roman society, there were still other areas of interest which had not yet been absorbed by the Christian movement.

Although Christianity was henceforth the only legal religion of the state, in certain circles a strong feeling of reverence for the antiquity of pagan culture still survived. Theodosius might legislate all counter-interests out of existence, but it was no easy matter for him to find officials who would put his legislation into effect. There were indeed some slight efforts made to offer political resistance to Christianity, but these attempts were comparatively insignificant and easily suppressed. On the other hand, the passive resistance which heathen society still offered was not so easily met, and in spite of the violent methods sometimes adopted on behalf of Christianity, heathen sentiment still prevailed in many quarters.

Much survival power still remained in the pagan fondness for magical practices and for the

old Roman entertainments. It required more than an imperial enactment to change the long-established habits of the populace who sought supernatural aid from the magicians and the diviners. Nor did Christianity win a victory over these interests simply by blotting them out. Not by the immediate eradication of these sentiments, which had long been entertained by the educated as well as the ignorant, in their common human quest for supernatural aid, did Christianity finally triumph. Only as it developed more elaborately its own mechanisms to care for these interests, providing on its own account concrete ways of furnishing its members occult lore, of exorcising demons, and of compelling the future to unveil its secrets, did the customary heathen practices fall into disuse.

Likewise the deep-seated popular demand for the shows continued even among many Christians in spite of the frequent protests of their leaders. Long after Christianity became the approved religion of the state, the performances in the circus, theatre, amphitheatre, and stadium continued to exist and to draw a large attendance. In the end the Christian protest seemed to triumph, for ultimately these entertainments ceased. But their end was brought

about perhaps more by a decline in economic conditions than by an ideal protest on the part of the Christian preacher. Probably in the last analysis, it was the poverty which had overtaken the Empire that really brought the entertainments to an end by making it impossible for cities or individuals any longer to bear the enormous expense connected with these exhibitions.

Even certain of the oriental cults had taken so firm a grip upon the Roman world that they, too, were able to perpetuate themselves for a considerable period among the populace, in spite of counter legislation. In particular, the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis and of the Persian Mithra had made a strong appeal to many persons. The emotional satisfactions which they yielded, the attractiveness of their ceremonies, and their impressive rituals were values that could not be wiped out of existence in a moment by an authority from above, particularly by one that was growing so rapidly inefficient as that of the imperial régime. Here again Christianity's hope of final victory was to be realized in the last analysis, not through the operation of favorable legislation, but through a gradual process of growth by which the Christian movement developed more adequately its own capac-

ity to duplicate those features of the rival oriental cults that still had greatest survival value for satisfying the desires of the populace.

Perhaps less tenacious in its resistance and less deep-rooted in society was the surviving opposition of pagan culture as embodied more particularly in the Neoplatonic philosophy. Its representatives not infrequently leveled against Christianity criticisms of an incisive and embarrassing sort. Because of their persistent disregard for the gods of the state, Christians were charged with lack of patriotism and it was still not uncommon to blame them for the calamities that had overtaken the Empire. The Christian ideal for life was said to be impracticable and even detrimental to the well-being of society, since it stressed an attitude of nonresistance, stimulated asceticism, and induced many people to withdraw from the practical activities of life. Christians, it was alleged, were trying to make citizens for heaven and not citizens for the Empire. Moreover, the more intellectually inclined were given to remarking upon the irrationality of the Christian philosophy.

In the realm of intellectual interest, as in other spheres, Christianity's final victory was

secured not through a process of suppression, but by a program of expansion and absorption. To counteract criticism, it also resorted to the devices of the intellectualizing apologist. In order to answer the charge that Christianity was responsible for the calamities that had fallen upon the world in ancient times, Christians themselves wrote philosophies of history to prove that the past had been nothing but one long series of calamities until the Hebrew and Christian religions had been revealed, and that present disasters were due to the wickedness of Rome and the attachment of the pagans to demons. Thus Christians early in the fifth century put forth a theory of history that prevailed for many centuries, and has only within recent times come to be seriously distrusted.

Similarly, Christians adopted from their critics a new social philosophy. While not abandoning their attachment to the ideals of non-resistance and asceticism and other attitudes that had originated in the notion of society's worthlessness, they developed a new sense of social responsibility, maintaining that they stood for practical effectiveness, even to the extent of fighting for their ideal of peace, were

it necessary to do so, in order to establish a state of society free from the possibility of future wars and purged of those vices which have no rightful place in a just government. Augustin agreed that the precepts of the Christian religion were not violated by engaging in a war actuated by benevolent designs.

When Christianity captured for itself an Augustin it was able to array on its side all the intellectual powers, interests, and emotions of a genuine Neoplatonist, who brought to the service of Christianity the full measure of contemporary pagan culture. In his famous treatise *The City of God*, Christianity was lifted in thought above the fate of the rapidly declining Roman Empire and given an intellectual justification for existence in its own right as a new kingdom of God upon earth. The imperial system was now transcendentalized, and thus saved for Christian idealism, at the moment when its earthly counterpart was on the verge of collapse.

IV

In its struggle with rivals, the new religion won the contest not primarily as an intellectual propaganda, but rather as a vital and complex movement in society. While it answered intel-

lectual needs, the demands made upon its capacity by the masses of the people were of a quite different sort. They were seeking emotional satisfactions, physical well-being, and attachment to an institution that would insure safety over the whole range of one's experience. Even an emperor was led to favor the new religion not because he found intellectual peace in its dogma, but rather because it seemed to him to offer the most promising hope of safety for society. Also the opposition that arose to Christianity was itself socially motivated. The sting of pestilence, the decline of prosperity, the terror of the barbarian invasion, and like hard facts of social experience were the stimuli that prompted enemies of Christianity to lay at its door the blame for the Empire's misfortunes. Not until the Christian religion had become a substantially organized and effective movement making its appeal on the ground of the social safety which it insured, promising protection in the present life and all desired blessings for the future, did it ultimately win the victory over its rivals, and establish in reality its supremacy in the ancient world.

To attempt to specify in particular the items which stand out most conspicuously as causes

for Christianity's success would be a precarious undertaking. One would need to lay stress upon the functioning significance of various phases in the growth of the Christian movement. And features which proved attractive at one age were sometimes supplanted by other items of more immediate concern at a subsequent date. One does not find the success of Christianity explained by the presence of one or more static items that remained unchanged throughout the course of its history. On the contrary, the movement had vitality and power because it was always an ongoing concern, perpetuating, to be sure, heritages from the past, but also ever making new adjustments and manifesting new features in accordance with changing environments and the new demands of the varying situations.

Undoubtedly the Christian religion exhibited many distinctive features that might be specified, but whether they were causes or consequences of its success might often be questioned. But when determined, they became important formative factors in shaping the further course of the movement's history. Among these shaping forces one would certainly include the content of the Christian teaching as the message

was phrased from generation to generation by representative Christian preachers. But this message itself proved to be an evolutionary product that changed its form from time to time as it perpetuated heritages from the past, gained new accretions in the present, and expanded to meet the demands of the future. The quality which gave it perpetuity of appeal seemed often to lie quite as much in its power of expansion and possibility of change as in its conservation of tradition.

Beside the Christian message, as factors contributing toward Christianity's success, one might list the agencies by which the movement insured satisfactions of even a physical sort. In a world where the environment was thought to offer constant dangers from hostile supernatural powers, it was a matter of prime concern to find a religion capable of averting calamity and giving one assurance of protection throughout the whole range of life's interests. In this respect Christianity from the outset presented a very emphatic claim to attention. It provided for the casting out of demons, the healing of diseases, the assurance of supernatural guidance in all the affairs of this life, and guaranties of a happy existence in the world to come.

Safety was not merely a vague promise held up before the individual for future realization only; it was an immediate fact experienced through one's membership in the Christian group. The Christian society itself was now a divine institution. Thus the structure which the Christian movement devised to serve its interests was of no slight importance as a physical factor in the prosperity of its cause. By this means it was able to make a large place for itself amid the distressing experiences of society in the declining period of the Empire's history. It gave to each of its members a concrete group experience, a community of interest, and an economic safety greatly superior to that possessed by the majority of outsiders living in the Roman world of the day. Its officials, with their clearly defined functions, the prescribed activities of the worshiping group, the collections and distribution of money for the needy, and other displays of its practical piety, were important factors in the movement's success.

The form which it assumed answered not alone to a demand for the conservation of the community's own well-being, but also to a need for the establishment and maintenance of safe relations with the larger social environment.

While its membership was comparatively small and it attracted but slight attention from without, it needed only a very simple type of structure to meet its necessities. But when the religious assemblies in various places had solidified into well-defined units, and the conflicts with rival interests had become more acute, Christians manifested not only a strong group consciousness but also a lively interest in consolidating the various groups scattered about the Mediterranean. In the course of time the aggressive agencies of the movement became so efficient that it drew unto itself larger and larger numbers of adherents, until it succeeded in making conquest of the dominant forces in its environment. By taking under its protection first one and then another of the contemporary social interests, eventually it embraced within its sphere of operation even political activities.

Christians also profited greatly by the rise of a distinctive social psychology characteristic of their groups. They possessed a consciousness of unity and a loyalty to common interests that gave marked strength to their cause. Undoubtedly the violent resistance which the movement had met contributed very largely toward the development of this distinctive

attitude on the part of Christians. On the other hand, its consciousness of common interest and unity of purpose constituted no small factor in attracting the attention of outsiders. Probably this was true even of Constantine, who may have realized the lack of any such healthful state of mind among the other citizens of the Empire. In no section of contemporary society was there the same measure of conscious social solidarity that the Christian movement now displayed.

Christianity secured its victory ultimately by a long and gradual process of social evolution involving intimate contacts with numerous environmental influences and the operation of various forces distinctive of life within the group. In the course of its history the movement produced dogmas of great variety, it worked out an elaborate ritual, it devised a complex organization, and it put into force definite programs of action. But these various features of its history came into being, not for their own sakes, but for the service of the movement itself. Nor is it a fact that creeds and rituals and laws ever remained absolutely static, in the sense that they constituted the permanent features of Christianity which guaranteed its success.

Every phase of its history was subject to change and variation of a more or less rapid sort as history moved on from age to age in conformity with the circumstances environing the communities and the new conditions emerging within their own life. It was not any supposably static feature of Christianity, remaining absolutely unaltered by time, that gave it perpetuity. Rather, its permanence was insured by the facility, more or less great according to circumstances, with which the movement from time to time produced such concrete features of dogma, ritual, organization, and action as served the needs of the hour. Christianity triumphed not by virtue of one or another item that emerged in the course of its evolution, but as a movement taken in its entirety and ever developing by the intricate process of vital social experience.

Such were the main lines along which the Christian movement grew in making conquest of the ancient world. If one has been accustomed after the traditional Protestant fashion to find the secret of Christianity's success in the more restricted field of Christian doctrine, by stressing the message rather than the movement,

the results of a survey of the movement's social origins may on first sight prove somewhat disconcerting.

While the ideals of the reformers prevailed, the study of history, in order to be profitable, had to yield normative results in the realm of belief and practice. But in approaching early Christianity from a modern point of view, one may not assume that the chief purpose of historical study is the recovery of a set of doctrines or precepts to be authoritatively passed on to subsequent generations. At the very outset it must be allowed that men of today may find some early Christian teachings acceptable and others untenable. Even views that may meet with modern approval will derive their justification not from the fact that they are recorded in early Christian history but from their conformity to the realities of present-day experience and knowledge. This procedure means that the normative quality of history is no longer an accepted theory. If the past is still to have significance its worth must be measured by some standards of value other than those of normativeness.

Nor will values any longer be phrased primarily, or exclusively, in terms of doctrinal

interests. Modern Christianity is becoming less and less doctrinally motivated and is directing its energies more and more toward the realization of effective action on the part of Christian individuals and groups as functioning factors in society. Doctrinal motivation is gradually being supplanted by social motivation. And in the temper of this modern attitude one is prepared to find in early Christianity a new understanding of the movement's history and significance when evaluated in terms of similar social interests and experiences.

One who has grasped the meaning of the social point of view may still expound doctrinal themes from Christianity's past, but not primarily for the purpose of inculcating traditional dogma. Early Christian beliefs, along with other similarly significant items in the history, may be adduced for the practical purpose of stimulating activity among moderns in the pursuit and realization of a more effective living. By these and all other available means a modern leader strives to produce effectively operating communities that will give themselves loyally to perpetuating a type of life marked by attitudes, devotions, consecrations, ideals, and activities which in the course of the ages have

received the name Christian, and which shall continue to develop in strength and power under new situations and amid new experiences in a fashion worthy of their respected ancestry.

In accordance with this ideal, the study of Christian history becomes the fascinating pursuit of the varied ways in which the people of the past have sought to realize their desires within that area of experience and attainment commonly termed religion. A modern man's problems may be quite different from those of the ancients and he may be unable to persuade himself that the past offers advice to use in parrot-like fashion for the explicit direction of modern thought and conduct. But when sincerity of life, fidelity of purposes, and the energetic pursuit of duty become the items of interest about which the hope for religious betterment revolves, then ancient Christianity may become a very genuine source of inspiration as one revives in imagination that type of life which made the Christian movement a power in the past.

The specific interests of a present-day Christian may be quite new and the ideas which he entertains may vary widely from those held by his ancient predecessors, but the degree to which

they rendered adequate service to their own world and the fidelity exhibited in their living cannot fail to be a source of much helpful suggestion to a modern Christian, even though he is living in a very different environment and is faced by conditions almost wholly new. If he has successfully visualized the devotion and energy which characterized the ancients in the service rendered to their contemporaries, he can scarcely fail to become a more zealous and effective servant of his own generation.

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The foregoing "suggestions," it need hardly be said, do not aim to furnish a comprehensive bibliography but only to introduce the reader more specifically to different sections of the general field covered by the present volume.

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